

THE EMERGING PHENOMENON OF LAY SPECIALISTS  
IN CATHOLIC PARISHES

By

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By

Anthony Michaelraj

### Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, and my father who is 92 years old,  
and to my brother priest John Gillespie, who celebrates the  
Silver Jubilee of his Priestly Ordination.

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THE EMERGING PHENOMENON OF LAY SPECIALISTS  
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This study was conducted in four Catholic parishes in Florida of an organizational shift toward increased utilization of salaried lay professionals to carry out activities formerly the sole responsibility of priests. The research was conducted from 1994 to 1996. Parish organization, which has always entailed some lay involvement, has increased since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Researchers have attributed the increase to the decreasing number of priests, to a sense of shared responsibility in the Church, and as an accommodation to democratic trends in society.

Lay professionals belong to a subculture of laity; known as "lay specialists," they are emerging as a new phenomenon in American Catholic parishes. By virtue of specialization in a particular program, recognition in the community, and

remuneration for their work, lay specialists have different statuses in the parishes, performing several specialized roles for which the Sacrament of Holy Orders (Ordination) was formerly thought necessary. Research questions were grounded on two general hypotheses: 1) Catholic parishes are threatened by breakdown in families, disappearance of Catholic education (schools), and erosion in distinct Catholic beliefs and practices; and 2) the presence of lay specialists performing their services increases parishioners' involvement and financial contributions to the parish, which, in turn, necessarily contribute to the stability and/or survival of the parish.

The hypotheses were tested in a cross-sectional survey of 1,293 participants from four parishes. The data indicate that some parishioners do in fact seek out the lay specialists for help for personal or domestic problems. Lay specialists interpret the problems in terms of Catholic beliefs and practices. In addition, they provide Catholic education to children as well as adults and they increase parishioners' involvement in the parish. Of particular interest, the intensity of interaction with lay specialists emerged as a significant predictor of increased financial contributions to the parish.

The study analyzes these patterns in a human materialist paradigm. When open systems are threatened by environmental or cultural forces, they may respond to these forces by elaborating their structures to more complex levels. From the research in four Catholic parishes, the author of this study maintains that the lay specialists are the new phenomenon that is emerging to respond to the social forces that threaten the stability and/or survival of the Catholic parishes.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Specialists are found in nearly all religions. Specialists who manifested some evidence of spirit interactions or other religious activities have such titles as shamans, mediums, diviners, priests, seers, gurus, and prophets. Anthropologists have investigated the characteristics and functions of these religious specialists. Eliade (1964) studied the technique of Siberian shamans, who interacted with the spirit world on behalf of the people, particularly in healing, divination, protection, and finding game animals. Other researchers such as Hultkranz (1973) and Siikala (1978) have found similar functional characteristics of the shamans: fighting spirits and defending the psychic integrity of the community.

The types of religious specialists change according to the ecological and cultural conditions of the societies in which they were found (Halifax, 1975). Shamans are found primarily in hunting and gathering or fishing societies with no political interaction beyond the local level. The shamanistic practices changed as societal conditions changed in the transformation from hunting and gathering to agricultural societies (Winkelman, 1992). Shamans' roles developed with the disintegration of the clan system and the stratification of the community (Siikala, 1978). Mediums are found in agricultural societies with political integration beyond

the level of the local community (Lewis, 1971). Priests are found in societies with centralized authority and a hierarchy that are integrated with the political structure of the society. The priests work as community leaders propitiating supernatural beings on behalf of the community (Winkelman, 1992). Their priestly functions include divining, magic, and teaching with other specialized roles such as judge and magistrate (McKenzie, 1965). How the functional characteristics of the specialists in religion change in correspondence to the cultural and ecological factors of the society are documented in anthropology (Durkheim, 1961; Berreman, 1971; Harris, 1988). These data indicate that religions contain features and patterns which belong to or are intimately associated with the cultural core and, therefore, arise out of environmental adaptations (Winkelman, 1992).

The Catholic Church as an organized religion has specialists. Traditionally, there are three levels of specialists distinguished by the ritual or Sacrament of Holy Orders: episcopate (bishop), presbyterate (priest), and diaconate (deacon). Bishop, priest, and deacon, all of whom have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, have a mandate to serve people in the area of their special ministry. The bishop is the chief of the Catholic diocese that consists of several parishes usually headed by a priest. Working with the bishop or a priest, the deacon serves the people. Ordinarily, priests function as religious specialists in the Catholic parishes. Their several titles such as confessor, teacher, counselor, social worker, administrator, spiritual director, and head of the Liturgical (ritual) celebration speak for their multiple tasks in the parish.

When parish priests, even with the assistance of deacons, find themselves overwhelmed by these tasks, they seek help from volunteer associations such as the Rosary Society, the Catholic Family Movement, and the Altar Society (Dolan, 1985). The laity, as volunteers in these associations, perform several services of spiritual and social nature in the parish. They obey the Church authorities and contribute financially to the maintenance of the parish priests and activities (Dolan, 1985). The laity's involvement in the parish is primarily directed and supervised by the parish priests. The laity are in the parish to help the priests.

However, the Second Vatican Council that took place from 1962-1965 brought a change in the importance of the laity in the Church. The laity as a "different caste" in the Church was changed by retrieving the Early Christian concept of the Church as a "people of God" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter II). This concept, "people of God," incorporated all the baptized, the laity and clergy. The ritual or Sacrament of Baptism was marked as the common denominator between the laity and clergy. As a result, the laity were encouraged to undertake tasks in the parish on their own initiatives, reveal their particular needs and desires to the parish priests, and participate in the Church's Mission in the secular world, by reason of their knowledge and competence (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter IV). As a result, the laity became more involved than they had been before Vatican II. They help with the activities connected with the Liturgy, which were considered the sole domain of the priests: the reading from the Scriptures and the distribution of

Communion. They conduct Communion-service (a devotional practice of prayer in which the Scripture is read and consecrated host is given out to the communicants) in the parish church, when there is no priest available to celebrate the Mass. They participate in the parish democratic structures such as Parish Council and Finance Council. They take the initiative to form small voluntary groups for a specific purpose, such as prayer, Bible study, and hospital ministry.

Several researchers have studied the lay activities in the parish. Some attributed the laity's greater involvement in the parish to the decrease in number of priests (Schoenherr & Sorenson, 1982; Gilmore, 1986). Some ascribed lay ministry to the ideology rooted in the ritual of Baptism, which calls for a shared responsibility in the Church (Hardon, 1981; Whitehead, 1986). Still, others interpreted lay participation in the parish as an accommodation to the democratic trend in the society (Gleason, 1970; Lenski & Lenski, 1987; Seidler & Myer, 1989). All this indicates that in the past three decades, lay involvement in Catholic parishes has emerged as a topic of scientific inquiry.

There is, however, a new emerging phenomenon I observed in Catholic parishes that remains relatively unexamined. I call this phenomenon the "lay specialists." These are specialists in the parishes who do not belong to the clan of the ordained specialists (priests). I observed this phenomenon, lay persons assigned to specialized roles in a parish, during the three years (1990-1993) I worked in St. Benedict parish as a priest. During these years, I completed my course work for the

doctoral degree in anthropology at the University of Florida and began in 1994 this research on lay specialists in four Catholic parishes in Gilmer, a pseudonymous Florida community. Lay specialists work in the parish, but do not belong to the category of parish lay volunteers. They are males and females, married or single, employed full-time or part-time in the parishes. The majority have formal education and training with certification in some traditions of Catholicism; others have special skills for the work in the parish. They perform several specialized tasks for which being ordained with the Sacrament of Holy Orders was once considered necessary. My observations of their work led me to document both change and continuity in the four Catholic parishes in Gilmer. I found change in the fact that there are lay specialists mediating between people and religion. Traditionally, priests were the primary religious specialists who taught theology, provided preparations for the Sacraments, gave spiritual direction, counseled families and individuals with severe relational problems, assisted the sick and dying, led liturgical celebration, and administered parish personnel and volunteers. Now, the majority of these specialized tasks are performed by the lay specialists. The dynamics of interaction between parishioners and priests have changed. The priests' direct contact with the parishioners is substantially narrowed to the celebration of Mass and Sacraments. Parish lay volunteers, who used to work under the direction and supervision of the priests, are working now under the lay specialists.



### Research Questions and General Hypotheses

These observations led me further to ask the following research questions: who are the lay specialists? How are they differentiated from the laity? What is the nature of their tasks in the parish? What are the domains of their services to the parishioners? What are the impacts of their specialized tasks in the parish? These questions led me to formulate the following general guiding assumptions:

1) Catholic parish organization is threatened by breakdown in families, disappearance of Catholic education, and erosion in distinctive Catholic beliefs and practices. Such a situation demands “specialized services” rather than the “general services” in the parishes traditionally given by the priests. The lay specialists meet such demands by their expertise in a particular area of specialization.

2) Lay specialists’ specialized services increase parishioners’ involvement and financial contributions to the parish. These, in return, necessarily contribute to the stability and/or survival of the parish.

### Theoretical Perspective

The following is a brief discussion of the theoretical underpinnings that guided my study. I based my analysis on Human Materialism as formulated by Paul Magnarella (1993) as a strategy for analyzing sociocultural systems. Although this strategy contains the vestiges of several traditions of scholars, such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marvin Harris, and Alfred Adler, it logically integrates the different elements of their work

to address three central problems: 1) how ongoing sociocultural systems function, 2) why they function as they do, and 3) how they change through time.

Magnarella (1993) pointedly explains that “the human materialist conception of a sociocultural system contains an asymmetric structure comprised of infrastructural, social structural, and superstructural components” (p. 4). The infrastructure consists of three substructures: material, human, and social. The material infrastructure includes technology, tools, machinery, productive capital equipment, modes of production, and the productively relevant parts of science, as well as environmental resources and factors. The human infrastructure includes demographics of the people. The social infrastructure includes the effective ownership and control of the forces of production, as well as the persons in positions of economic and political power and the positions they hold.

The social structure includes all forms of social organization: family and kinship organization, political, religious, economic organization, and work relations. The superstructure includes the ideologies, rituals, and symbols associated with various organizations in the social structure and those of rival or alternative ideologies, rituals, and symbols espoused by rival, minority, or marginal members of the population. One of the most basic tenets of Human Materialism is the dynamism that is operative within, between, and among the three major components.

Human Materialism as a strategy is used here to analyze the four Catholic parishes as sociocultural systems. These parishes function and change through the

responses they make to the human problem domains such as the drive to satisfy hunger, spouse/partner or parent/child bonding, a need for social or religious affiliation and identity, feelings of love, hostility, pride, shame and sorrow, loneliness, and the parishioner's susceptibility to indoctrination by ideologies. Catholic parishes are open systems. They respond to cultural or environmental intrusions by elaborating their structures to more complex levels. According to Darwinian principle, any system that is non-adaptive runs the risk of extinction. It is a basic assumption that people would behave to further their own well-being by optimizing perceived benefits, be they material, affective, or spiritual (Magnarella, 1993). In this study, I attempt to show that the changes which have occurred in the Catholic parishes correspond to the degree of responses made by the individual parishes to the problems that threaten the infrastructural component of the parish. I show how these changes are validated by the ideologies of Vatican II.

Human Materialism is positivistic and scientific in its approach. Human beings are conceptualized as rational, cost/benefit calculating, emotional, loving, and hating. They are social beings capable of being indoctrinated to some degree in ideological, ritual, and symbolic systems which, in turn, influence their thought, behavior, and perceptions of their natural and sociocultural environments. I have observed, measured, and described such human characteristics or behaviors in this study.

### The Survey Design

The purpose of my survey design is to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some attitude, or behavior, and belief of this population. From my preliminary interviews with the parishioners in 1994, I found that the lay specialists' services were in two areas: 1) human and 2) spiritual. They help the parishioners with relational, emotional, and personal problems such as spouse/partner, self-worth/esteem, and loneliness. In the spiritual realm, the lay specialists' help includes the religious education, the practices, and the beliefs of the parishioners. Therefore, my survey design is intended primarily to identify the human problems, the religious beliefs, and practices of a sample Catholic group and later to test if there is any noticeable impact of the lay specialists' services on the parishioners' involvement in the parish, adherence to religious beliefs and practices, and financial contributions. A cross-sectional survey was used to determine the sample populations' human problems, religious beliefs and practices, involvement in the parish, and financial contribution.

The sites of this study were four Catholic parishes, St. Thomas, St. Benedict, St. Justin, and St. Francis, in a Florida community with a population of approximately 97,700. These parishes (the names of which are fictitious) differ in demographics: St. Thomas is the oldest parish in town with a large retired and elderly population. St. Benedict is a parish as well as student center; it tends to focus on the spiritual growth of the faculty and students from the two major educational institutions in town, a

university and a community college. The remaining two parishes, St. Justin and St. Francis, have predominantly families and children. These four parishes differ in the percentages of parish tasks performed by lay specialists: St. Thomas has the least (18.2%), St. Benedict has the largest (65.2%), and St. Justin and St. Francis have the same level (42.9%). These variations that I found in the demographic factors and the tasks of the lay specialists add an element of comparative depth to this research.

The selection of a sample group from each parish was based on availability of the parishioners and their convenience. In my preliminary interviews with the pastors of the parishes, I learned that the parish records that keep the memberships of the parishioners do not match the actual attendance of the people in the Church. That is to say, more people attend the Church than what the membership records indicates. It is estimated that only about 70% of the Church attenders register their names in the parish. And those who are registered do not inform the parish office when they change their addresses and telephone numbers. Besides, registered Catholics have the option of going to any parish they like in or out of town. Considering these issues in the selection of a sample population from four parishes, I used the following method. I administered the questionnaire only to those Catholics aged 18 and older, who attended Mass on one weekend in each of the four parishes. I chose a time period when there was the least amount of distraction in town, such as a football game, an art festival, or a parade. I assumed that those who attend these weekend Masses are in the habit of attending Mass on Sundays. My assumption was supported by survey

results. A vast majority (84%) of those who participated in the survey indicated that they attend Mass weekly. The distribution of weekend Masses in Gilmer is as follows: St. Thomas 3, St. Benedict 6, St. Justin 5, and St. Francis 3. All in all, attendees at 17 weekend Masses were asked to be voluntary participants in the questionnaire. The participants had two options. They could either fill out the questionnaire immediately after the Mass in the parish community hall or rooms (pencils and questionnaires were kept ready there) or take a questionnaire home, then mail it to me in the postage-paid envelope. The total number of participants was 1,293. The distribution by parish was as follows: St. Thomas 203, St. Benedict 404, St. Justin 393, and St. Francis 293. Of the respondents, 1,190 (92%) filled out the questionnaires soon after the weekend Masses, and 103 (8%) took the questionnaires home and mailed them back to me (220 questionnaires were taken home, but only 103 were returned). There were no noticeable differences in the responses to the questionnaires between those that were filled out in the community hall or rooms and those that had been taken home and returned by mail. It is possible that those who took them home spent more time to respond to the questionnaire. However, there was no evident difference in them except that some were more legible. In interpreting these data, it must be remembered that the sample consists of Catholics who actually attend Mass. Catholics who rarely or never attend Mass are not in my sample. It can be presumed that their levels of belief and observance are lower than the levels found in my sample.

One might attribute the good turnout to the survey to my status as a Catholic priest. While I agree there may be some element of truth to this, I do not attribute the willingness of the people only to my status. Gilmer is considered a college town with thousands of students and faculty who are constantly involved in surveys and interviews. I was informed that the Catholic parishes are often targeted for interviews and surveys among the parishioners. People in parishes are used to filling out questionnaires and to helping the students who pursue serious study. I interpret the large number of the people who participated in my survey as simply showing compassion and regard for research students. My interpretation that I did not receive special attention is supported by the number of return-mail questionnaires. Of those 220 questionnaires that were taken home, only 103 were returned to me. "Priestly status" was not operative as an influence here, but, I think for sure, there was compassion.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used in data collection was self-designed after a series of preliminary interviews (18 in total) with different groups, the parishioners, lay specialists, and parish priests. I used the method of participant observation in as many aspects (religious, social, small group, large gatherings) of parish community activities as possible. I conducted scheduled in-depth interviews with the lay specialists and recorded their stories on a total of 15 tapes. I interviewed the priests to learn about the dynamics of interactions between the lay specialists and the

parishioners. The priests and the lay specialists became accustomed to my paper, pencil, and questions, and they seemed accustomed to the possibility of an impromptu interview. I recorded my observations and thoughts in the journal I kept and updated it periodically. I clipped newspaper and magazine articles to present national data on human problems, religious beliefs, and practices.

For the purpose of this study, I formulated the following eight variables that I considered important based on my observations: 1) demographic factors, 2) religious beliefs, 3) religious practices, 4) human problems, 5) parishioners' involvement in the parish, and 6) parishioners' weekly financial contribution to the parish, 7) lay specialists as "examples" for the parishioners, and 8) parishioners' satisfaction with lay specialists' services. A copy of the questionnaire appears in the Appendix.

Demographic factors in the study consisted of the most common independent research variables: parish, gender, age, education, Catholic education, marital status, and income. Gender emerged as a predictor of noticeable differences in human problems, religious beliefs and practices, parishioners' involvement in the parish, and lay specialists' as examples. Age was correlated with differences in human problems, religious beliefs and practices, parishioners' involvement in the parish, and lay specialists as examples. The variable education also covaried with differences in human problems and lay specialists as examples. Catholic education was treated as a variable to measure noticeable differences in lay specialists as examples. The variable marital status was treated to find significant differences in human problems



and lay specialists as examples. Income was a predictable variable for parishioners' seeking help from the lay specialists and making financial contributions to the parish.

My measure of religious beliefs, taken from the official teaching of the Catholic Church, consists of 13 items divided into three categories: 1) five items related to the core beliefs (nature of the spirit world), 2) six items related to ethical and moral beliefs, and 3) two items related to traditional Church practices. Religious beliefs were analyzed by the independent variables, gender and age group. The purpose of analysis was to indicate the levels of beliefs of the sample group. The strategy of analysis is presented in Chapter 4. It was assumed that religious beliefs are important for people who seek meaning and understanding about human problems as well as to maintain an identity in the religion.

Religious practices in this study represent the universal practices of the Church in parishes. They consist of 17 items, divided into three categories: 1) three items in the core Catholic Sacraments, 2) eight items in the Catholic sacramentals, and 3) six items in the general Christian practices. Religious practices were analyzed by the independent variables, gender and age group. The purpose of analysis was to indicate the levels of practices among the sample population. Chapter 5 presents the strategy employed for the analysis of religious practices. It was assumed that religious practices are expressions of beliefs; they are important to persons seeking comfort and strength from religion. These persons who interact with the lay specialists on human

problems also are helped in their beliefs and practices. The religious beliefs and practices constitute the religious setting for the parishioners' Christian spirituality.

The list of 14 human problems in this study represent the major life problems named by the sample population. In order to strengthen the face validity of these items, I repeated the list of problems three times to investigate: 1) whether a particular item has been a problem, 2) whether they had sought help from the lay specialists or priests on that particular problem, and 3) whether they engaged in prayer about that particular problem. Human problems are analyzed by parish, gender, age group, education, and marital status. The purpose of my analysis was to indicate the level of problems confronted by the sample population, as well as the means of help they seek through prayer and help of the lay specialists. The help of the lay specialists (as well as of the priests) on human problems is indicated in this study by other terms such as "interactions" and "services." I use "interaction" with the lay specialists that took place on the occasions of human problems as an independent variable to measure the influence or impact of lay specialists on respondents' involvement in the parish programs, adherence to religious beliefs and practices, and financial contributions. Human problems constitute the sociocultural setting for the parishioners' Christian spirituality.

The instrument to measure parishioners' involvement in the parish consists of 14 items, each representing a program presently operating in the sample Catholic parishes. These items were analyzed by parish, gender, and age group to indicate the

degree of involvement in each parish by gender and age group. The influence of lay specialists on respondents' involvement in the parish was measured by the independent variable "lay index" (levels of interactions with the lay specialists on human problems). I created the variable "priest-index" for comparative purposes to examine whether the respondents interacted more with the lay specialists or priests concerning their problems. A comparative analysis is presented between the findings on these two variables.

The respondents financial contributions could conceptually be considered part of respondents' involvement in the parishes. I have treated it separately. The analysis required looking at three elements: 1) the mean weekly contribution in each sample parish, 2) the mean weekly contribution of those who sought help from the parish, and 3) the mean weekly contribution of the respondents in relation to the income categories. The purpose of this analysis was to find 1) the difference in contribution between those who sought help and those who did not seek help from the parish, 2) which income category interacts with the lay specialists, and 3) future trends (prediction) between seeking help from the parish and financial contribution.

The item, lay specialists, as "examples" for the parishioners, was measured and analyzed in two parts: 1) as examples for seeking greater involvement in the parish and 2) as examples for seeking a connection between daily life experiences and faith traditions. The analysis includes the variables parish, gender, and age group. The purpose of analysis was to indicate the levels of appreciation of the positions of lay

specialists in the parishes. It was assumed that an “exemplary” way of giving services would elicit a sense of appreciation from those who benefit from the services.

The parishioners’ satisfaction was measured and analyzed in the following two steps: 1) those who had an opinion on 16 items of services of the lay specialists and 2) among those who had an opinion, differentiating the satisfied from the dissatisfied. The strategy for analysis includes rating scales. The purpose is to indicate the level of parishioner satisfaction about the services of lay specialists in the sample parishes. In the tradition of anthropology, evaluation of a program is carried out to determine if that program is satisfactory to the recipients.

### Organization of the Study

I organized my data in keeping with my objectives. Chapter 2 presents the infrastructural components of the four Catholic parishes from where this research sample was collected. The demographic factors are presented in order to highlight the significant differences of the four sample parishes. A brief history of lay persons’ involvement in Catholic parishes in the United States is presented. The socioeconomic profile of each sample parish calls for specific kinds of services from the parish specialists (lay specialists as well as the priests). The validating ideologies of the Second Vatican Council presented in this chapter are crucial in explaining the laity’s involvement in the parishes today.

Chapter 3 presents the human problems of the sample population. Social forces affect every population or group of people; Catholics are not exempted. They share

in the human problems of the society. I indicate the major human problems of the research sample. These problems differ according to the demographic factors. Some problems are gender based; others are centered on age. Education and marital status have a special relation to particular problems. Males, females, and persons of different age groups and status seek help on human problems from the parish specialists.

In Chapter 4, I present the religious beliefs of the sample population. Religious beliefs are assumed to give identity to a particular religious group, differentiating it from other religious groups. A strong religious belief provides a meaning or understanding of life experience. I present Catholic beliefs under three categories to indicate that all beliefs add to the Catholic identity of the parishioners. The impact of environmental forces is seen in the beliefs of the sample population. The Catholic parishes offer services to maintain Catholic beliefs and to interpret human problems in light of them.

Chapter 5 traces the religious practices of the sample population. Religious practices are meaningful (at least emically) only in terms of the beliefs one possesses in life. A strong belief is assumed to increase the intensity of one's religious practices and a weak belief to lessen the interest in religious practices. I present the religious practices of the sample population under three categories: some are core Catholic beliefs, which give a distinct Catholic identity to the believer; some are Catholic

sacramentals, which are primarily devotional practice; and some are general Christian practices, which are practiced by people of other Christian denominations.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are the crucial parts of this research. Lay specialists and their specialized services are the nucleus of these chapters. In Chapter 6, I present a descriptive definition of the lay specialists from three perspectives: specialization, recognition, and remuneration. The case examples from the lay specialists highlight some of their special characteristics in the parishes. All four sample parishes have lay specialists, but not in the same numbers. On the basis of the essential tasks performed by the lay specialists, parishes are grouped into three types: Type One--Traditional parish, Type Two--Transitional parish, and Type Three--Transformed parish. The tasks of the lay specialists and the dynamics of interaction between them and the priests differ in each type of parish.

Chapter 7 presents an ethnographic detail about what the lay specialists are actually doing in the parishes. I have presented the specific roles of the lay specialists that I found in the sample parishes in the following areas: liturgy, spirituality, religious education, marriage and family, music, youth, and the rite of Christian initiation of adults (RCIA). The descriptive presentation of the individual tasks of the lay specialists explains how they are helping the parishioners with human problems, and contributing to the personal Christian spirituality of the respondents.

In Chapter 8, I address the important question about the lay specialists in the sample parishes: Does the presence of these lay specialists exert any impact on the

religious lives of the parishioners? My strategy for answering the question is explained. As indicated above, “interaction” with the lay specialists on human problems is treated as the independent variable. Several aspects of the religious life of the respondents, such as their involvement in parish programs, adherence to religious beliefs and practices, and financial contributions are treated as dependent variables. The “theoretical framework” of my choice of these dependent variables derives from the two ideologies of the Second Vatican Council. From the ideologies, I have identified two domains that serve as the dependent variables: 1) the parishioners’ involvement in the parishes and 2) the parishioners’ adherence to their Christian spirituality through their daily life. Through analysis of my survey data, I present the answer to the question of whether the presence of the lay specialists impacts parishioners in 1) their involvement in the parish and 2) their personal Christian spirituality. The parishioners’ financial contributions are analyzed in terms of their interactions with the lay specialists. Though lay specialists differ from the parishioners, they share in the same “vocation” of the parishioners. I assumed that their positions of service in the parish would be examples to the parishioners. This assumption was tested and analyzed by two statements: 1) the lay specialists are examples for seeking a greater involvement in the parish and 2) the lay specialists are examples for seeking a connection between life experiences and faith traditions. As a final analysis, I present the results of the parishioners’ satisfaction with the services

of the lay specialists. The level of satisfaction was drawn only from the parishioners who had formed some opinions about the services.

In Chapter 9, I present the findings of this sample research with the consideration of the likely trends in the Catholic parishes in the United States. Are the parishioners more likely to get involved in the parishes, if they interact with the lay specialists? Does the lay specialists' services in the parishes increase the financial contributions of the parishioners? Would the services of the lay specialists impact parishioners' Christian spirituality? Do the parishioners consider lay specialists as their examples to commit more to the parish and find meaning between life experiences and faith traditions (beliefs and practices). Does parishioners' satisfactory level match the number of essential tasks performed by the lay specialists in the parishes? Through analysis of my survey data I have answered these questions in this chapter. I conclude this chapter with a pragmatic question: Do the parishes need the lay specialists? My conclusions are positive because the positions of lay specialists in the survey parishes 1) give specialized services to the parish individuals and families, 2) cause greater involvement of the parishioners, and 3) increase the weekly financial contribution in the parish.

This study has been fascinating to me because of my own ministry as an ordained specialist. My life as a graduate student and work in a parish offered me opportunities to learn and to observe the changes that are currently taking place in the Catholic parishes in the United States. Among the several changes I observed in the



States, this change, namely the emerging phenomenon of lay specialists in the parishes, touches the very core of the parish organization: the infrastructural (parishioners, their involvement in the parish, and their financial contribution), and the superstructural (their faith traditions: beliefs and practices) components. The lay specialists' influences on the above components were researched, tested, and analyzed for this study. This study indicates a "direction of change" that is taking place in the social structural components of Catholic parish organization. The study contributes to the body of anthropological literature in "development studies" which has an element of cultural and comparative depth. Religious identity of an organization can be threatened by the environmental forces changing organizational customs and beliefs. The emergence of lay specialists in the Catholic parishes could contribute to the stability and/or survival of the organization and to the preservation of distinct identity of the organization. Although it would have been interesting to compare the beliefs and practices of Catholics to those of members of other Christian groups in the community, this was not possible in view of the total absence of comparative data.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE CATHOLIC RESEARCH SAMPLE

#### Historical Antecedents

##### The Catholic Parish

The Catholic parish, a geographic division, is perceived as the community of Christian faithful who hold common religious beliefs and participate in the celebration of rituals known as Sacraments. The parish church is a place where they gather regularly on Sundays and special days of religious obligation to participate in the Mass that is upheld as the center of the Catholic religion. The most recent code of Canon Law, 1983, defined the Catholic parish as

. . . a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church (which means the diocese) whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan bishop, is entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor. (Canon Law: 515, p.92)

This definition has three possible elements for understanding the Catholic parish: 1) The parish is a community of Christian faithful; 2) the parish has a stable basis in a diocese; thus it is linked to the authority of the bishop, the chief of the diocese; 3) the parish is under the authority of a "pastor," which in Latin means shepherd.

Membership in the Catholic Church comes through the Sacrament of Baptism received either as a child or as an adult. If a person already baptized in other Christian denominations wishes to become a Catholic, he or she is received into the Catholic Church through a comprehensive process called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), which I describe later. Membership in a local parish is determined either by residency within the territory of a parish and/or by a formal registration. During my initial interviews with the local parish pastors, I learned that only about 60% of the parishioners usually register their names in the parishes. Membership in a local parish does not prohibit anyone from frequenting the other parishes. In fact, to the survey question, "What parish do you belong to?" an average of 10 persons in each parish, about 3% of the respondents, had said that they belong to the "other"--that is, to a parish that is not within the survey area. Some of them had written the name of the parish to which they belong. From the names of such parishes, it was easy to determine that the respondents had come from the neighboring Catholic parishes situated within 30 to 50 miles from Gilmer. However, for the reception of Sacraments such as Marriage and children's Baptism, Catholics customarily approach the parish which they claim as their own.

The parish is not thought of as existing apart from the diocese. Normally, a parish covers a specified geographical territory of the diocese, and it serves all the faithful of that territory. However, the Catholic Church allows the establishment of non-territorial parishes by reason of the rite, language, or nationality of the faithful

of a certain territory (Canon Law, 518). A cluster of parishes and its chief, the bishop, make up the diocese.

The priest, known as the pastor, is in charge of the parish. He carries out his role as the spiritual leader of the parish, as spelled out in the Canonical language: by teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in collaboration with the other priests and lay members in the parish (Canon Law, 519). The terms teaching, sanctifying, and ruling denote the triple responsibilities of the pastor who 1) transmits the teachings of the Church to his parishioners through homilies, religious education, and adult education; 2) administers the Sacraments that are specified for the different life cycles of the parishioners; and 3) manages the parish properties, such as the church, office buildings, rectory, and school. The pastor may be assisted by one or several other priests who were formally called curates and are now known as parochial vicars. Besides, the pastor may have a lay staff that usually consists of a secretary, a religious education director, a music director, and a sacristan who take care of the material things and arrangements for the celebration of Sacraments.

The lay members (laity) make up the congregation of the parish. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has highlighted the importance of the laity in the parish. The Council has construed the laity's role as to 1) seek greater participation for the Church Mission in the secular world according to their abilities and the needs of the time; 2) reveal with freedom and confidence their particular needs and desires; 3) undertake tasks on their own initiative for the good of the Church; 4) give prudent

advice to pastors; 5) propose suggestions and manifest their opinions by reason of their particular knowledge, competence, or outstanding ability on those things which pertain to the good of the Church (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter IV). The history of Catholicism in the United States shows that the laity were involved in the service of the Catholic parishes long before the Second Vatican Council. For the immigrant Catholics, the parish was a stable base in which to live and work. They could preserve their ethnic identity, and practice their religion. Therefore, before I present the socioeconomic profile of the four survey parishes, I delineate some of the salient features which mark the history of Catholicism as well as the lay involvement in the Catholic parishes in the United States.

#### Early Ethnic Catholicism: Lay Involvement

Historians have evidence showing that Catholicism was first brought to what is now the United States by the Spanish Missionaries, headed by the explorer Juan Ponce Leon. The first parish was established in Florida in 1565 at St. Augustine (Gannon, 1983; McNally, 1984). The Spanish Missionaries worked for the next two centuries among the Indians and established missions across the southern and western regions of the country. The French Missionaries, who traveled south from Canada, converted the Indians to Catholicism in the Northeastern and Midwestern States (Walch, 1989). The lasting legacy of these Spanish and French Missionaries is seen in a string of missions that have become the sites for major American modern cities

such as Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Antonio, New Orleans, St. Louis, and San Francisco, among others (Dolan, 1985).

The English Catholics who suffered persecution in the Church of England escaped at the risk of perilous ocean voyage and established a settlement in Maryland in 1634. This New World colony for English Catholics seems to have enjoyed a large measure of religious freedom. The denominational equality was codified by the Maryland Assembly in several laws culminating in the "Act Concerning Religion" of 1649 (Walch, 1989). Historians view this Act as an important step in the long struggle for religious freedom in this country. In 1654 a Puritan-dominated assembly repealed the toleration act of 1649. Several Catholics were put to death, and the Jesuit priests who served these Catholics were persecuted. Although a little measure of religious tolerance was restored in 1660, it did not endure. In 1688 the Anglican Church was established as the state church of Maryland.

The place of Catholicism in colonial Maryland was not a public affair. There were no churches or parishes. Catholics gathered in homes and attended Sunday Masses celebrated by the Jesuit missionaries. Common religious practices on Sundays and holy days created a bond by which they trusted one another, intermarried, supported businesses and thus collectively supported the Church. The typical Catholic community was rural and consisted of twelve to twenty families that lived close to one another. However, the Catholic communities in Maryland began to increase in size as well as in visibility during the eighteenth century. By the eve of the American

Revolution in 1776, the Catholic Church had become an institution in Maryland (Walch, 1989).

The American Revolution brought about changes in the status of Catholics. Both Catholics and non-Catholics united to seek independence from England. Military assistance to the colonies which fought the British armies was provided by Catholic France. According to Walch (1989) men like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson detested bigotry of any kind; they attacked religious prejudice generally and anti-Catholicism specifically, for the colonies were to be a new nation based on the principle that all people are equal.

With the end of the war in 1783, Catholics were free to practice their faith without any fear or domination from outside. They were "Americans." In order to strengthen their unity and preserve their identity as American Catholics, the Pope appointed Father John Carroll in 1784 as Superior of the American Catholic Missions (Dolan, 1985). Carroll responded to the needs of the renewed interest in Catholicism and formed new Catholic parishes. As the European seminaries found it difficult to meet the demand for priests in America, Carroll proposed to establish a national Catholic academy and seminary. At the same time, Carroll encouraged the laity to take a greater role in the affairs of the parishes.

The laity undertook many of the tasks necessary to meet the temporal needs of the parishes. They were involved in the organization and the government of parish communities. Many Catholic communities elected leadership committees, collected

funds, purchased land, constructed church buildings, and provided for their maintenance (Walch, 1989).

This "congregation-model" which was operative among their Protestant neighbors in matters of church administration was known also as the lay trustee system of parish government. This model, however, created friction between lay trustees and bishops because it was a substantial shift from the way the Roman Catholic church traditionally operated. Since Roman Catholic custom and law gave that authority exclusively to bishops, very serious conflicts between lay trustees and bishops, often resulting in excommunication, interdict, and schism, developed throughout the Northeast (Dolan, 1985).

The laity committed themselves to the establishment and support of ethnic parochial schools. Catholics felt the need to have Catholic schools in order to attain their chosen goals: 1) protection of the religiosity and ethnicity of Catholic children and 2) reinforcement of the positive self-identity of Church and home (McAvoy, 1968). For these reasons the immigrant Catholics contributed their hard-earned dollars for the establishment and support of parochial schools (Walch, 1989). Besides the parochial schools in their national parishes, the immigrants preserved their cultural heritage by having their own theaters, recreational activities, amusements, trade unions, and charitable institutions (Dolan, 1985). However, the changes that were taking place in both church and society challenged the Catholics to make a shift from ethnic interest to American Catholicism.



### From Ethnic Catholicism to American Catholicism

The year 1789 was marked by two important events that profoundly affected the course of American Catholicism in the United States. In April, George Washington became the first President of the United States and under his administration religious liberty as one of the principles of Bill of Rights was codified. On November 16, the Vatican appointed John Carroll as the first Catholic bishop in the United States (Dolan, 1985; Walch, 1989).

Bishop Carroll committed himself to the education of future clergy and lay leaders. He established Georgetown Academy in 1789 and called upon the Catholics to support the institution. It was his hope that the institution would mold lay leaders who would return home and educate other Catholics both by word and example. With the arrival of the Sulpician priests in the United States, Carroll planned to establish a seminary. In 1791, he opened St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore to educate native clergy under the administration of the Sulpician missionary priests.

The arrival of Irish and German Catholic immigrants in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia increased the need for more dioceses and priests. In 1808, Baltimore was made the archdiocese and new dioceses were established at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown in frontier Kentucky (Dolan, 1985). The shortage of priests in the dioceses was compensated for by the emerging communities of women's religious orders such as the Daughters of Charity, the Visitation Sisters, the Carmelites, and the Sisters of Loretto. Several religious orders responded to requests

to establish schools in the parishes and to found other social institutions like hospitals and asylums.

Dramatic demographic shifts took place during the mid-nineteenth century because of the tremendous influx of immigrants from Ireland and Germany. Walch (1989) documented the impact on cities as immigrants tended to settle in certain areas. For example, by 1850 the Irish settled in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. When the railroads moved West to the cities of Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee, so also the Irish moved. They helped to build railroads that connected these cities with the East. The Germans settled in the so-called "German Triangle"--the region roughly bordered by the cities of Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. For the majority of these immigrants, the Catholic parish was the focal point of their religious practices, as well as preserving their native language and culture. The organization of Catholicism in general during the nineteenth century mirrored the ethnic and social composition of the population.

Such organization of Catholicism precipitated challenges and crisis in several dioceses. The bishops provided leadership in national church issues such as liturgical and ecclesial practices in the United States. They gave specific guidance to the laity on social issues. However, there was tension between the role of the laity and the authority of the bishops. According to the lay trustee-system, the laity had exerted substantial power over local church matters. They bought land, built churches and schools, and petitioned local bishops for the appointment of pastors of their own

nationality. Often they retained title to Church property, being unwilling to give up their control to the bishops. Therefore, the bishops met in councils "to standardize Church procedure and to remind the laity of the centrality of episcopal authority; the unstated purpose was to emphasize that American Catholicism could rise above regional differences to sustain itself as a national denomination" (Walch, 1989). As a result, a gradual shift from the congregation-model to the clerical-model took place. Walch (1989) reported that by 1885 American bishops controlled church property and the appointment of bishops.

The Third Plenary Council of 1884 authorized the compilation of a national catechism and the establishment of a national Catholic university. Of prime importance was that they instructed the laity to support parish schools.

All Catholic parents are to send their children to the parish school, noted the decree, unless it is evident that a sufficient training in religion is given either in the homes or in other Catholic schools. Those parishes without schools were to build schools within two years. (Walch, 1989, p.45)

The Congress of the United States passed an Immigration Quota Act in 1924 which ended the massive immigration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Dolan, 1985). The task of transforming the immigrants into American citizens was left to the schools, the social agencies, and the churches. As Henry Steele Commager said, the Catholic Church was an effective agency for democracy and Americanization. The Catholic Church in the United States embraced the American

concepts of business administration. As a consequence, on the national level, the bishops expanded their National Catholic Welfare Conference to become their administrative arm and to provide a national voice for their collective concerns. On the local level, a new generation of bishops used modern administrative and business practices to restructure and reorganize their diocesan work. The Catholic hierarchy inaugurated a concerted campaign for Americanization during and after World War I. By the end of the Second World War Catholics thought of themselves as Americans of Irish or Italian descent rather than as Irish-Americans or Italian-Americans (Walch, 1989). This new sense of identity strengthened American Catholicism and led to a revival in the 1940s and 1950s.

The Catholic family movement, later known as the Cana Conference, began in St. Louis, in 1941. Its purpose was "to integrate the mundane aspects of family life within a twentieth-century mentality both American and spiritual" (MacEoin, 1991, p.62). The Cana Conference was enriched by the Christian Family Movement to focus on the issues related to the family. In the 1950s, new Catholic parishes and schools were established. Religious devotion, public piety, and vocations increased.

According to Walch (1989) and Dolan (1985), Catholics of all ages attended Mass and participated in religious exercises in extraordinary numbers. Young couples participated in the Cana Conference and the Christian Family Movement to strengthen the spiritual life within the home. Catholics, generally, were moved by stories of

religious conversion and missionary work that appeared in the Catholic newspapers, books, and magazines that many Catholics received in their homes each week.

The years between the 1950s and 1960s are considered to be a pivotal period in the history of American Catholicism. Socioeconomic mobility and educational achievement, especially since the end of the World War II, brought affluence in the life of the Catholics. "Young Catholic veterans returned from war to attend college, win well-paid jobs with American corporations, buy homes in the suburbs, build new parishes, and participate in community affairs" (Walch, 1989, p.75). The parish was the center around which several spiritual and social organizations were established for the laity. Some of the more popular organizations were called the Altar Society, the Rosary Society, and the Holy Name Society. These societies developed their own constitutions and regulations, which spelled out their obligations to themselves and others (Dolan, 1985).

The above highlights of Catholic history in the United States show that the laity were involved in parish activities that were of religious and social character. The level of their involvement and the kinds of their activities were supervised by the pastors. The laity found support and a stable base in their parish communities. The Second Vatican Council that took place in 1960s not only highlighted the importance of the laity in the Church as we have seen above, but also introduced the ideologies that validated the involvement of the laity in the Church and called for further collaboration and involvement in the Church.

### Vatican II: Emergence of New Validating Ideologies

Human Materialism (Magnarella, 1993) views “validating ideology” as a legitimating power. It satisfies the people concerned that what they are doing or what they are expected to do is legitimate. The Second Vatican Council pioneered two ideologies that legitimated the lay involvement and collaboration in the Church: 1) the Mission of the Church belongs to every baptized person; 2) everyone baptized is called to Christian Spirituality or Holiness. The significance and implication of these ideologies are discussed next.

1) The Mission of the Church belongs to every baptized person. Traditionally, the Mission of the Church was thought to be the hallmark of the priests and religious. Their work in the Church was seen as a “vocation” received from God. The duty of witnessing to Christ and Christian life in the world (i.e., the Mission) was considered the role of the “chosen” (priests and religious) by God. The laity were viewed as clients in the Church. They were considered as a different caste involved in the worldly affairs. The two terms “in the world” and “of the world” denoted the distinction between the clergy from laity. The clergy were seen as persons in the world but not of the world, whereas, the laity were seen to be in the world and of the world. However, in the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church seems to have recognized that the successful Mission of the Church, namely the obligation of witnessing to Christ and Christian Life in the world, required the participation of the laity. The Council said of the laity:

They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the Spirit of the Gospel, they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. . . . Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all type of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the creator and the Redeemer. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 31, p.143)

This statement reveals an understanding of the nature of laity's role in the world. It was recognized as a "call" or "vocation" from God just as the role of the priests and religious is a "vocation" from God. The laity's role in the Churches was to witness to Christ and Christian life in temporal affairs by ordering them according to the plan of God (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 31).

The ideology of the Church's Mission was founded in the ritual of Baptism. Baptism is traditionally believed to bring a new birth and an incorporation into the Church symbolized as the Body of Christ. The Second Vatican Council brought deeper understanding of the significance of Baptism. All who receive a Baptism share in Christ's threefold Mission to teach, to sanctify, and to govern (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 31). This is called the Baptismal priesthood or Common priesthood, distinguished from the Ministerial priesthood received through the rituals of Holy Orders. Lay persons exercise their baptismal priesthood by their life of faith, hope, and charity in the particular situation of their family and life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1546-1547). From Vatican II, the Mission of

the Church has included the special roles of lay persons rooted fundamentally in the celebration of Baptism.

There were at least two implications of this ideology. First, Baptism confers equality of membership in the Church, which is a "people of God," a community, made up of all the faithful (Pope, bishops, priests, religious, laity). All members have a role to play in the Mission of the Church, but they give a diversity of services, each according to his or her vocation. Second, this baptismal unity was seen to be best expressed in the community celebration of the Sacraments, especially in the Mass. The laity was encouraged to take active participation in ways that are appropriate in the community celebration. Closely linked to the common Mission of the Church rooted in Baptism was the following ideology.

2) Everyone baptized is called to Christian Spirituality. The Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council reinterpreted the conventional understanding of Christian Spirituality and the persons who acquire it. Christian Spirituality had been seen as an other-worldliness, which consisted primarily in denying the present life and concentrating on religious practices that would assure heaven. Those who embraced religious life by the vows of poverty, obedience, and celibacy were thought to be in a "state of perfection," while, by comparison, the lay people were thought to be in a less perfect state. However, the Church recognized that the impact of the celebration of Baptism is the new birth (a new state of perfection or initial Holiness)



and that everyone who has been baptized has the responsibility to grow in Christian Spirituality.

Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No: 40, p.152)

The Church did not establish a single mode of growth in Spirituality. Rather it called the faithful to grow “unhesitatingly according to his or her own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works to charity” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No: 41, p.152). However, the Church stated that “this plan for the spiritual life (Holiness) of the laity should take its particular character from their married or family state or their single or widowed state, from their state of health, and from their professional and social activity” (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, No. 4, p.340).

The setting for the Spirituality of the laity shifted from traditional places such as shrines and pilgrim centers to work places, family homes, political offices, and communities. The laity were encouraged to experience God not only in prayer and Sacraments, but in all what goes on in life: the frustrations, tears, joys, laughter, feelings, and experiences of daily life (Foley, 1995). Accordingly, a shift occurred also from the traditional practices of piety such as novenas, rosary, fasting, and pilgrimages to reading the Bible, centering prayer, short term retreats, spiritual

reading, and helping others in need. The focus of these new practices was to discern God's presence in the "ordinary" things of life and to make connection between their faith and their daily life.

The Catholic Church in the 1960s legitimated the laity's role in the Mission of the Church and Christian Spirituality, which were considered once the domains of the priests and religious. The Church juxtaposed the laity's role to the ritual celebration of baptism. If so, is there a uniformity of lay involvement and Spirituality in all the parishes of the Catholic Church? As I discuss later, we do not find such uniformity even in our four sample parishes. Then, one might ask, what is the use of such ideologies in the first place? From our theoretical paradigm, it is safe to assert that "a new ideology is introduced into a system's superstructure and stays there until it has been spread to and inculcated by some segment of the population" (Magnarella, 1993, p.11). When these ideologies are spread and communicated to the faithful in all parishes, perhaps we may see homogeneous involvement of the laity. However, I think these ideologies, for the present justify the harnessing of human power (laity) in the Church's Mission and Christian Spirituality.

The purpose of this study is to examine the emerging phenomenon of lay specialists in the Catholic parishes. Who are they? What do they do in the parishes? Do they generate any influence in the parishes? Who are the recipients of their services? It is assumed that parishioners are the recipients of the lay specialists' services since they are employed as specialists in the parishes. While I keep the first

three questions for discussions in the following chapters, I present here a socioeconomic overview of the sample population in Gilmer. The sample was collected from the four Catholic parishes in Gilmer: St. Thomas, St. Benedict, St. Justin, and St. Francis.

### Statistical Overview of Research Sample

St. Thomas is the mother parish, founded in 1887. St. Benedict was established in 1923 as a student center to serve the spiritual needs of the Catholic students and staff at the university. Due to an increased number of students and staff at the university and the community college, it became a full-pledged parish in 1969. St. Justin and St. Francis became parishes in 1973 and 1987, respectively, reflecting suburban growth in the community. The steady growth of the Catholic population in Gilmer resulted in the establishment of four Catholic parishes within the span of a century. In order to discuss the socioeconomic composition of the sample population, I have chosen the following variables: gender, age, education, Catholic schooling, marital status, and income. I discuss later if these variables would exert some impact on the respondents on their human problems, religious beliefs, practices, involvement in the parish activities, and contributions. I discuss the questionnaire strategy under each variable.

### Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Several social surveys have been done on the gender differences in church attendance (Alston & McIntosh, 1979; Gee, 1991; Ploch & Hastings, 1994). Some of

TABLE 1  
Gender of Those Attending Mass, by Parish

Parish	Male	Female	Total
St. Thomas (%)	320 46.0	375 54.0	695 18.5
St. Benedict (%)	540 46.0	645 54.0	1185 31.6
St. Justin (%)	535 47.6	585 52.4	1120 29.9
St. Francis (%)	360 48.0	390 52.0	750 20
Total (%)	1,755 46.8	1,995 53.2	3,750

them affirm the conventional religious wisdom in America that women attend church more often than men. To provide some numbers, I randomly selected two Masses in each of our sample parishes and made a count of the gender of those attending. The count corroborated the conventional wisdom that more women than men attend church services. Of the 3,755 total parishioners whom I counted, 1995 were women, a majority of 53.1%. The figures are broken down by parish in Table 1.

National figure levels indicated that on the average, 10% more women than men attend church services in the United States (Chadwick & Garrett, 1995). The preponderance of women attending church services in our survey parishes is only 3%. However, I found a larger percentage of women than men responding to my

TABLE 2  
Gender of Respondents, by Parish

Parish	Male	Female	Total
St. Thomas (%)	72 36.2	127 63.8	199 15.5
St. Benedict (%)	172 42.6	232 57.4	404 31.5
St. Justin (%)	161 41.3	229 58.7	390 30.4
St. Francis (%)	115 39.8	174 60.2	289 22.5
Total (%)	520 40.6	762 59.4	1,282

questionnaire. Of the 1,282 respondents, 762 (59.4%) were women. The distribution is presented by parish in Table 2.

Does this greater representation of women in Mass attendance (and consequently response to the survey) hold across all other religious practices apart from Mass attendance? I explore that question in some detail below. One might be inclined to attribute this female bias in Mass attendance (and response to surveys) to the greater participatory roles that women have in Sunday Masses: lectors, altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, and ushers. This would be a rather tenuous analytic line to follow. It would appear rather that this preponderance of females is, in fact, a carryover from the past. Sociological studies demonstrate that women were more

attracted to Christianity than men in the early Christian communities (Stark, 1996).

Woodward, a senior religion reporter for Newsweek says,

In a pagan society that disparaged women, undervalued marriage, and regularly resorted to abortion and infanticide, Christianity extolled marriage and family life, protected and enfranchised women as members of the community, denounced abortion as murder, and readily encouraged their surplus of women to take (and domesticate) pagan husbands, who were notoriously inhospitable to both marital fidelity and family creation. (Woodward, 1996, p.10)

In the United States, women have always made up the majority of Christian congregations (Douglas, 1977). As far as Catholicism is concerned, the greater number of roles of women in the parish ritual and administrative services may have some impact on the longstanding tradition of women to be more faithful in church attendance and activities than men.

Further, studies done on the cross-cultural sex differences in socialization try to construe female bias in religion in terms of cultural influences. A cross-cultural study by Barry, Bacon, and Child (1957) demonstrated that across 110 cultures, little girls are almost always trained for nurturance, obedience, and responsibility, while boys are trained for self-reliance and independence. These sex-role differences seem to be reflected in the child's notion of God. As a result, girls are more likely to picture God as loving, comforting, and forgiving, while boys are inclined to view God as a supreme power, forceful planner, and controller (Wright & Cox, 1967). From these studies, Batson and Ventis (1982) inferred that "females may be socialized to have

those personality characteristics that would lead them not only to raise existential questions but also to view God as able to meet their existential needs" (p. 40). These culturally incited characteristics could explain females' relatively greater involvement in religion. However, the modern trend toward gender equality that challenges traditional male and female roles could lead to a diminution of gender differences in the future. In the survey parishes, males are almost as regular in their church attendance as females. The variable of gender in the survey did, in fact, prove to be a useful predictor of responses to other questions which I explored in this study, including religious beliefs and practices, attitudes toward lay specialists, and lay involvement in the parish. Males and females differ on these matters in the study.

### Age

The skewing is found not only in gender, but also in age. The survey respondents gave the year of their birth, from which their age is computed. The mean age for St. Benedict is 36.3, St. Justin 48.2, St. Francis 49.5, and St. Thomas 52.2. The variation found in the mean age between St. Benedict and St. Thomas corresponds to the demographic composition of these parishes. St. Benedict has a large Catholic student population from the university, while St. Thomas has a large retired population. Table 3 presents the breakdown of the age groups of the survey sample.

I placed the respondents in three groups, using the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as a reference point. Those respondents 55 and above are pre-Vatican

TABLE 3  
Age of Survey Respondents, by Parish

Parish	18-34	35-54	55+	Total
St. Thomas (%)	28 9.00	100 32.00	185 59.00	313 22.6
St. Benedict (%)	185 46.48	173 43.47	40 10.05	398 28.8
St. Justin (%)	100 26.04	133 34.64	151 39.32	384 27.8
St. Francis (%)	55 19.16	123 42.86	109 37.98	287 20.8
Total (%)	368 26.2	529 38.3	485 35.1	1,382

II, those 35 to 54 are Vatican II, and those 18 to 34 are post-Vatican II. I also refer to the older, middle-aged, and younger generations.

As we see from Table 3, our sample parishes present different age profiles. It is important to note that same number, 185, represented in St. Benedict and in St. Thomas. But it indicates in St. Benedict the post-Vatican II group and in St. Thomas the pre-Vatican II group. It confirms the demographic composition of these two parishes. Of the different percentages of the Vatican II generation, St. Benedict and St. Francis have the highest and St. Thomas has the lowest. This division of age groups helped to find the answer to the questions: Are there phenomenal differences



in matters of Catholic beliefs and practices among three generations? Who seeks the help of the lay specialists? These questions are explored in the next chapters.

### Educational Level

Several research studies have indicated the major role of education in the life and economy of individuals (Gallup & Castelli, 1987). A high correlation is established between educational level and socioeconomic status. Social scientists have questioned whether the patterns between educational level and religion would parallel those between socioeconomic status and religion. Burchinal (1959) and Gallup (1972) pointed out that an increased level of education correlated positively with church membership and attendance; that is, the higher one's education, the more likely that one is to attend weekly services. However, some other studies found a negative correlation between increased education and holding traditional religious belief (Feldman, 1969; Ford, 1960). That is, the higher one's education, the more likely that one is to attend weekly services, but not necessarily believe everything which the Church teaches. The Catholic Church, in general, promotes education as a means of transmitting values to future generations. Some studies indicate that Catholics in general seem to place a slightly higher value on education than the Protestants. The percentage of Catholics with a college background has more than doubled in the past thirty years (Gallup & Castelli, 1987).

Gilmer is a university town that offers opportunities for higher education and employment. The majority of the students come from the state of Florida with a

TABLE 4  
Level of Education of Respondents, by Parish

Parish	High School	Undergrad	Grad school	Doctoral	Total
St. Thomas (%)	50 24.75	75 37.13	60 29.70	17 8.42	202 15.7
St. Benedict (%)	15 3.73	185 46.02	146 36.32	56 13.93	402 31.3
St. Justin (%)	45 11.51	195 49.87	109 27.88	42 10.74	391 30.5
St. Francis (%)	37 12.85	139 48.26	76 26.39	36 12.50	288 22.4
Total (%)	147 11.5	594 46.3	391 30.5	151 11.7	1,283

smaller number from other states and abroad. They leave their homes and clan-reference groups and live in Gilmer where they create new hometown reference groups, especially with other students and faculty. The majority of the Catholic students and the faculty frequent St. Benedict Parish. Table 4 shows the level of education among the survey population.

The data in Table 4 are grouped into four educational levels: 1) those whose education stopped at or before completing high school, 2) those whose education stopped at the undergraduate level, 3) those who have graduate training or degrees (but not a doctorate), and 4) those who have a doctorate. There were nine categories

on the questionnaire, but they have been collapsed into the above four for tabular purposes.

As Table 4 indicates, about 12% of the survey population stopped their education at or before their high school degree. Almost exactly the same percentage have a Ph.D. or other doctorate. Of the other two categories in between, however, those who stopped after their undergraduate work outnumber those who went on for pre-doctoral graduate work.

A breakdown of these figures by parish, as presented in Table 4, shows that parishes present quite different educational profiles. St. Benedict has the smallest percentage of people whose education never went beyond high school. St. Thomas, with its higher percentage of retired population, has more than six times as many members who never attended college than St. Benedict. Does education correlate positively or negatively with religious practices and beliefs? Does education increase or decrease one's involvement in the parish? These and other questions are discussed later.

### Years of Catholic Schooling

Recent studies have focused on Catholic Educational Institutions and their role in preserving "Catholic Identity" (Carlin, 1996). In the United States, the school remained the nucleus of the Catholic educational network. The Catholic Church, in the early years of this century, developed a distinctive mission for the Catholic schools in the United States. The American Catholic education system reached its

TABLE 5  
Catholic Schooling of Respondents, by Parish

Parish	None	1-8 yrs.	9+ yrs.	Total
St. Thomas (%)	69 35.75	65 33.68	59 30.57	193 15.6
St. Benedict (%)	162 41.65	127 32.65	100 25.71	389 31.5
St. Justin (%)	113 30.13	137 36.53	125 33.33	375 30.4
St. Francis (%)	79 28.42	106 38.13	93 33.45	278 22.5
Total (%)	423 34.3	435 35.2	377 30.5	1,235

peak in terms of enrollment in 1965-66. Research studies show that there were 11,000 elementary schools, 2,400 high schools, and about 350 colleges providing education for 5.6 million students (Francis & Egan, 1990; Quigley, 1978). By 1988-89, there were only 7,505 Catholic elementary schools and 1,362 secondary schools in the United States, a considerable decline from the figures of 1965-66. Grant and Hunt (1992) attribute the decline in the Catholic education to a loss of widely shared sense of Catholic mission to protect the religiosity, and to reinforce the positive self-identity of Church and home. Table 5 presents the years of Catholic schooling in the survey sample.

The data in Table 5 are grouped into three levels of Catholic schooling:

1) those who had none, 2) those who had 1-8 years, and 3) those who had 9 years and more. On the questionnaire there were three general categories: numbers of years of Catholic schooling in grammar school, in high school, and in college. The total number of years for each respondent was added and collapsed into the above three levels for tabular purposes.

As the data indicate, the percentage of people who had no Catholic education is the same as those who had 1-8 years. That is, about one out of every three had no Catholic schooling. On the other hand, the majority of our samples (65%) had some Catholic schooling ranging from one year to more than nine years. There is similarity between St. Justin and St. Francis in the percentage distribution of people who had Catholic schooling: in both parishes, about 37% had 1-8 years of Catholic schooling and about 33% had nine years and above. St. Benedict has the highest percentage of people among those who had no Catholic schooling. This might be explained by the assumption that some of the Catholic students who come to the University may not have had access to a Catholic school for their primary, middle, and high school education. Does it put greater pressure on the parishes to offer Catholic education at the parish level either through Religious Education or Adult Education? I examine this question later.

TABLE 6  
Marital Status of Respondents, by Parish

Parish	Never Married	Married	Separated/ Divorced	Widowed	Total
St. Thomas (%)	15 8.52	128 72.73	19 10.80	14 7.95	176
St. Benedict (%)	34 14.66	172 74.14	25 10.77	1 0.43	232
St. Justin (%)	27 8.36	258 79.88	22 6.81	16 4.95	323
St. Francis (%)	10 3.80	226 85.93	17 6.46	10 3.80	263
Total	86	784	83	41	994

### Marital Status

According to the Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, marital status in the United States has undergone enormous change in the 1980s (Bennett, 1994). The divorce rate per 1,000 married women rose from 9.2 to 14.9 in 1970 and to 20.9 in 1991. National surveys indicate that 58% of American Catholics are married, 31% have never married, and 11% are divorced or separated. The divorce rate among those who belong to Catholic communities seems to be lower than among those who do not belong. Table 6 presents the marital status of the survey sample. The questionnaire had five categories: 1) those who had never married, 2) those who are married, 3)

those who are separated, 4) those who are divorced, and 5) those who are widowed.

Categories 4 and 5 have been collapsed into one for tabular purposes.

As indicated in Table 6, of the 994 respondents, 79% are married, 9% had never married, 8% are separated or divorced, and 4% are widowed. My survey results corroborate with the national survey results in which the vast majority of the Catholics are married.

St. Francis has the highest percentage of married population among our survey samples. At the other end, the percentage of those widowed is the highest in St. Thomas. And the highest percentage of those never married in St. Benedict might represent the undergraduate students who frequent St. Benedict for Sunday Masses. In the separated and divorced category, St. Benedict and St. Thomas have the same percentage (about 11%), and St. Justin and St. Francis have the same percentage (about 6%). Marital status was used to examine questions such as who seeks services in the parish.

### Income

A study of American Catholics in 1987 found that there was a dramatic shift in the income and education of the Catholics in mid-1960s.

For the first time in the history of the nation, the proportion of Catholics in "upscale" groups (upper income and education levels) matches the proportion of Protestants. In addition, a higher percentage of Catholics are currently found in the college than in the general population, suggesting that Catholics are poised for even

further gains in education and income. (Gallup, & Castelli, 1987, p.2)

Is there any correlation between socioeconomic status and religion? There have been several studies that focussed on this relationship, but the results are not consistent. The studies of the 1950s indicated that members of the middle class were more likely than members of the lower middle class to be religious and to attend church (Lenski, 1953; Burchinal, 1959). D'Antonio et al. (1989) indicated that lower income Catholic families were more likely to become attached to the church, although they gave less money to the church. Table 7 presents the economic status of our survey population by their annual income.

TABLE 7  
Income of Respondents, by Parish

Parish	Less \$25K	\$25-49K	\$50-74K	\$75K+	Total
St. Thomas (%)	90 45.23	49 24.62	40 20.10	20 10.05	199
St. Benedict (%)	170 42.82	87 21.91	76 19.14	64 16.12	397
St. Justin (%)	85 22.37	144 37.88	85 22.37	66 17.37	380
St. Francis (%)	47 16.79	103 36.79	61 21.79	69 24.64	280
Total	392	383	262	219	1,256



In my preliminary interviews, I found it difficult to obtain answers in the "income" category. For tactical reasons, I put the "income" question at the end of the questionnaire so that the respondents would answer first the most interesting questions, especially on beliefs and practices. Since I found that people are reluctant to give raw figures, I asked them to bracket it within the 13 categories: categories 1-9 had an increase of \$5,000, categories 10-11 had an increase of \$25,000, and categories 12-13 had an increase of \$100,000. I collapsed 13 categories into four: 1) those whose income was less than \$25,000; 2) those whose income was between \$25,000 and \$49,000; 3) those whose income was between \$50,000 and \$74,000; and 4) those whose income was \$75,000 and above.

As Table 7 shows, those with income of \$50,000 and above represent about 40% of the our survey population. Those in the lower two categories, less than \$25,000 and \$25,000-49,000, accounted for almost exactly the same percentages, 31% and 30%, respectively.

Among the four survey parishes, St. Francis has the highest percentage of affluent and the least in the lowest income category. Conversely, St. Thomas has the highest percentage of the least affluent and the least in the highest income category. St. Benedict and St. Justin resemble each other in their percentages in the two highest categories, although St. Benedict has 50% more than St. Justin in the category of least affluent. Later in this study I examine whether income has any appreciable impact on people's involvement and financial contributions to the parish.

The socioeconomic profile has delineated the following characteristics of the survey population: gender, age, education, Catholic schooling, marital status, and income. Although the four parishes display different profiles, overall, the survey sample population can be described as an educated group of individuals belonging to an economic status that is middle class and above. The majority of the population is married and has some years of Catholic schooling. As far as the mean age is concerned, it is not monolithic. More females than males tend to attend church services and volunteer for parish or common activities such as filling out my questionnaire soon after the Sunday Masses. In this chapter, I indicated how the members of the sample parishes differed in terms of age, income and education. In the following chapter, I present how the sample parishioners have somewhat different clusters of problems.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE PROFILE OF HUMAN PROBLEMS

The preceding chapter presented a socioeconomic profile of the Catholics who participated in the survey. In this chapter I discuss the major life problems which they revealed and the extent to which they approach the solution to these problems in a religious context. In anthropological perspective, this focus on concrete human problem domains is an appropriate focus within which to pursue my interest in religion. Anthropology has traditionally viewed religion somewhat functionally as a solution to problems. Whether we as anthropologists turn to Malinowski's psychological analysis of religion as a response by individuals to insecurity or to Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalist view of religion as a societal response for the need to maintain stability or to more recent functionalist analyses such as Rapoport's view of religion as a mechanism for maintaining ecological stability or Wallace's view of religious ritual as a mechanism for revitalization of threatened culture, we find a constant tradition in anthropology of searching for the ways in which individuals and societies use religion as a device for solving concrete problems. In the words of Tremmel, for example, "Religion is a complex form of human behavior whereby a person (or community of persons) is prepared intellectually and

emotionally to deal with those aspects of human existence that are horrendous and nonmanipulatable" (1984, p. 7).

Catholic religious life may also be analyzed in this framework. The typical Catholic parish in the United States now offers several ministries (services) that are targeted on not only religious growth but also human development (MacEoin, 1991). A parish, for example, may offer counseling services in the areas of family relations, social relations, career, responsibility, educational difficulties, and anxieties or stress generated by social and domestic criminal violence. Though the Catholic Church has helped people meet their needs, there has been an evolution in the kinds of help provided. In my personal interviews with parishioners of 70 years and above, they reported that when they had some problems of a spiritual or social nature, they would call on their pastors for help. The help consisted often in a meeting with the pastor to discuss their problems. The directions given by the pastor were often taken as though they were given by divine assistance. An element of faith and trust in the pastor's advice seems to have been an important ingredient in the solutions to the problems.

Today, however, most Catholic parishes have at least one or two specialized lay ministries dealing with issues formerly dealt with by the pastor. The survey parishes are no exception: the four parishes have them, and one parish has many such ministries for special events or problems. For example, within the areas of marriage and the family, there are several specialized ministries for the pre-married (engaged

couples), married couples, parents, divorced, separated, singles, and children of the divorced. Most of these ministries are given by full-time or part-time lay specialists.

In this chapter I present, first, a profile of the human problems that are named by the survey population. I then examine the degree to which people engage in prayer to address these problems. In order to indicate that most of the identified problems are not unique to the sample population in this community, I use national data wherever these are available to show that these problems are diffused throughout the national population.

### Human Problems

In my preliminary interview with parishioners, I asked them to state their problems in life. The purpose of this open-ended preliminary interviewing was to generate a list of problems that could eventually be built into the questionnaire. Having devised a list of problems on the basis of these preliminary interviews, I repeated the list of problems three times on the questionnaire. On the first list, respondents were asked to indicate whether a particular item has been a problem for them and to what degree. On the second list, the respondents were asked if they had sought help from anyone on pastoral staff (priests and lay specialists) in reference to the specified problem. On the third list, respondents were asked whether they had engaged in personal prayer about their problems. The intent of asking the first two questions is self explanatory. The third question needs a brief comment. When believers of a religious tradition have problems, they usually adhere to their religious

practices (Wallace, 1966). In the case of traditional Catholics, these would include Mass, the Sacraments, personal prayer, fasting and pilgrimages to shrines or holy places. In return, they seem to experience a sense of hope, emotional release, and closeness with the Sacred. In the United States, religious attendance is said to have reached its peak (49%) from the mid-eighties to mid-nineties. In the opinion of some, this surge in religious practice has come in the wake of a series of cataclysmic events such as AIDS, hurricanes, floods, and economic recession that occurred during that period (Barna, 1996). As I point out now, however, not all problems are viewed by the sample population as equal objects of personal prayer.

Table 8 presents a list of the problems and the number and percentage of the 1,293 respondents who reported having each of the problems. I prioritized them from the most reported to the least reported problems.

It is noteworthy that the six problems most frequently acknowledged are all either interpersonal and relational in character, or emotional. They reflect either stresses in relationships that are supposed to be harmonious, or negative internal feelings on the part of the person. The percentage of people reporting such problems is high. In contrast, the percentage of people reporting social problems such as crime, and drugs, etc. is small, perhaps surprisingly so, in terms of the attention that is given to these problems in the media. The analysis indicated that only 1.2% of the sample population reported all 14 items as problems. Eleven percent of the sample population

TABLE 8  
List of Problems Reported in Number and Percentage

Problem Domain	Number	Percentage
Communication/conflict	701	55.4
Loneliness/depression	674	52.7
Self-esteem/worth	633	49.5
Parent/child	572	44.6
Spouse/partner	548	42.7
Parent/in laws	490	38.3
Job loss	457	35.7
Health	451	35.3
Education	291	31.7
Responsibility/commitment	249	19.5
Unplanned/unwanted pregnancy	227	17.8
Domestic violence	221	17.3
Drugs/alcohol	196	15.3
Crime	189	14.8

reported 5 items as problems. The majority of the sample population reported 6 items as problems.

I found that the problems reported differ somewhat from parish to parish in the survey. The members of the four parishes differ in terms of age, income, and education. These variables exert an impact on the problems that people have. The four

TABLE 9  
Percentage of People in Each Parish Reporting the Problem

Problem Domain	St. Thomas	St. Justin	St. Francis	St. Benedict
Communication/ conflict	57.29	50.00	51.90	62.28
Loneliness/ depression	54.27	44.47	48.28	62.78
Self-esteem/worth	48.24	44.33	50.87	54.09
Parents/children	51.50	39.69	47.42	43.92
Spouse/partner	44.78	35.48	40.21	50.37
Parents/In-Laws	39.50	30.33	39.45	44.75
Job Loss	37.69	31.70	37.59	37.31
Health	43.72	31.19	39.18	32.17
Education	22.73	18.77	16.26	31.42
Responsibility/ commitment	22.61	14.69	18.82	23.13
Pregnancy	18.59	16.24	17.01	19.40
Domestic violence	23.00	14.40	12.80	20.40
Drugs/Alcohol	18.00	12.08	18.28	14.93
Crime	14.50	11.89	14.14	18.16

parishes have parishioners with somewhat different clusters of problems. Table 9 shows the percentage of people in each parish who had the problems.

Neither the columns nor the rows add up to 100%, because Table 9 reports the percentage of people in each parish who acknowledged experiencing a given problem



set. The approximate prioritizing of the problems is roughly the same in each parish, at least in terms of generic problem types. That is, the interpersonal and intrapersonal problems tend to rank high.

St. Benedict parish caters more than the other parishes to students. St. Thomas has a higher percentage of elderly and retired people. As expected, St. Benedict reported a higher incidence of educational problems than St. Thomas. A higher incidence of health problems was reported by the more elderly parishioners of St. Thomas. In terms of the intrapersonal, emotional problems—loneliness/depression and poor self esteem, these two parishes scored higher than St. Justin and St. Francis. The “student parish” scored higher than the “elderly parish” in terms of experiencing problems with the emotional, intrapersonal issues. One might have expected that St. Thomas parish, with its specialization on service to more elderly Catholics, many of whom are widowed, would have a higher incidence of loneliness. The data do not bear this out, however. Students are not only more insecure than the elderly, they also appear to be lonelier. In all four parishes, however, these problems (intrapersonal, emotional—loneliness/depression, poor self-esteem) rank much higher than the social problems (crime, drugs/alcohol, violence).

There is another notable distinction between St. Benedict and St. Thomas in terms of parent/child problems. St. Thomas parish reported the highest incidence of problems labeled on the questionnaire as “parent/child relationships.” One may assume that it is the parents reporting problems with their children. And since the

parents are largely elderly, the children with whom they are experiencing problems are adult children. In contrast, St. Benedict scored highest on reporting problems with "parents and in-laws." Here, one may assume that it is adult children who are reporting the problem. That is, in both parishes parent/child problems are present, but the parishioners of St. Thomas report them from the parental perspective, whereas the parishioners of St. Benedict are more likely to take the point of view of the adult offspring.

For purposes of further discussion, I collapsed this list of 14 items into a smaller list of seven "problem areas": 1) health, 2) crime, 3) drugs/alcohol, 4) violence, 5) education, 6) marriage and family, and 7) personal. I examined the responses concerning each of these problem areas one-by-one, to see whether there are any differences among subgroups defined by variables more frequently discussed in the anthropological literature: age, gender, education, marital status.

### Health

Health issues emerged as number eight in the responses of the survey population. But in terms of the prominence in the anthropological literature, health issues have a high level of interest. In terms of public attention in the United States' media, health also is given priority. Health care has become very expensive and sometimes inaccessible. The advances in medical technology and the newly available sophisticated medical services have proliferated the specialization of physicians; with specialization came increased costs. Although the United States Government had

TABLE 10  
Distribution of Health Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage Reported
18-34	88	23.91
35-54	181	35.63
55+	174	45.91
Total	443	
Percent of total		35.3
Chi-Square 39.5, $P < 0.001$		

created Medicare for the aged and Medicaid for the indigent in 1965, according to the social studies, there are about 37 million people without any coverage of health care, and 25 million more have inadequate health coverage. Poor health is often reflected in psychological disorders such as stress, loneliness, marital discord, and alcoholism (Scarpitti & Anderson, 1989). Though health problems did not rank high on the survey, health issues are still noteworthy in that more than one out of three respondents in our survey population (35.3%) identified health as a problem.

I found no difference by gender on the health variable. That is, the tendency to report health as a problem was equally strong among males and females. However, as Table 10 indicates, there were major differences by age.

The association between health problems and age is not surprising. As people advance in their age, their concerns for health increase. The younger age group (18-34), however, is less concerned about health as a problem both because of maturational and lifestyle variables. That is, not only does their youth protect them from illness, but also they are inclined to diet and exercise in concurrence with the cultural coercion that seems to identify good health with success and poor health with failure in life.

Health problems, however, are created not only by age, but also by different types of stress. The divorced (44.71%) and widowed (44.00%) indicated a slightly higher percentage of concerns about health than those who are never married (30.77%), married (35.04%), and separated (37.50%). The high incidence of health problems among the widowed indicates that physical well being is linked to emotional well being.

Also worthy of comment is the fact that educational level was significantly ( $P < .01$ ) correlated with the reporting of health problems, but only among the least educated. That is, nearly half of those who had only a high school education reported health as a problem, whereas the incidence among other groups was closer to one out of three.

### Crime

Crime topped voters' concerns in the 1996 election of the President of the United States. When a group of 625 registered voters in Florida were asked, "What

do you think is the most important problem in the nation that the president must deal with?" 45% of them said crime/drugs (Ruffy, 1996). Social studies indicate there has been a 550% increase in violent crime since 1960 in the United States while population has increased only 41% (Bennett, 1994). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, eight out of every ten Americans can expect to be the victims of violent crime at least once in their lives. Since 1990, more than 90,000 people have been murdered, about twice as many Americans than were killed in Vietnam War.

Every year in America, there is a murder committed every 22 minutes, a rape every five minutes, a robbery every 47 seconds, and a violent crime of some kind committed every 22 seconds. Five million Americans are victims of violent crime every year, while 19 million are targets of property crimes, such as larceny, burglary, or theft. (Reed, 1994, p.87)

Some studies find that there has been some decrease in the crimes committed by people in the 25 years and older group. However, there has been an increase in the incidence of juvenile crime, the crime committed by those in the 14-17 age group (Chandler, 1996). In order to fight against juvenile crime, the President of the United States has proposed a 495 million-dollar national campaign in his 1998 budget (Hunt, 1997). A telephone poll of 500 adult Americans taken for Time/CNN reveals that 59% of the survey population worries about being a victim of crime (Smolowe, 1993).

Crime has traditionally been studied as a kind of deviant behavior. Social scientists have formulated various mechanisms of social control to prevent deviant behavior. One of those mechanisms called "internalization of social norms" pertains to the goal of institutions such as religion and family. In this context, religious services in the form of counseling and spiritual direction may be helping youth to internalize those values for a crime free society as well as serving as a source of comfort for those who fear themselves to be the victims of crime (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985).

Crime has a lower order of priority in our survey population. Only 14.8% of respondents reported that crime is a problem, which is an exception to the usually higher national crime consciousness. This could be considered as one of the outcomes of concentrated security services in the community after five college students were murdered in 1990. Besides the increased police patrolling in the city, the university campus security offers special protection and escort service to those students who need to reach home after it is dark. However, as our Table 11 indicates, the age group of 18-34 year, both male and female, thinks of crime as a problem more than the other two age groups.

The majority of the students fall under this (18-34) age group. In my one-on-one interviews, I found students who were worried about crimes that were happening in the nation. They were concerned, in particular, about the innocent victims of crime

TABLE 11  
Distribution of Crime Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage Reported
18-34	67	18.26
35-54	80	15.69
55+	38	10.05
Total	185	
Percent of total		14.8
Chi-Square 10.5, $P < 0.001$		

in the society. Such concerns often triggered questions about the Providence of God and justice for the victims of crime. Crime as a problem had no statistical significance to one's educational status, and marital status.

#### Drugs/Alcohol

National surveys indicate that there is a 50% reduction in drug use from its peak in the late 1970s. However, the problem remains relatively constant among the number of hard core addicts. The adolescent drug use trends have increased nationwide. According to the White House Office of National Drug Control Strategy (1992) in 1992, among eighth grade students, 11.2% reported trying marijuana. This was one percentage higher than in 1991. In addition, it was reported that LSD use among eighth-graders has increased 24% from 1991. In Florida, the story is different.

TABLE 12  
Distribution of Drug/Alcohol Problems, by Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage Reported
Male	112	21.58
Female	84	11.19
Total	192	
Percent of total		15.3
Chi-square 25.4, $P < 0.001$		

Drug use among the adolescents in Florida is higher than the national average. A drug use survey taken by Florida Health and Human Services among 22,000 middle school and high school students in 1995 showed that 43% of the students said that they used alcohol, 31% used tobacco, 20% smoked marijuana, 6% used cocaine, and 10% admitted that they had inhaled various substances (*The Gainesville Sun*, March 4, 1997, p. 4A).

Like crime, alcohol/drugs has a lower order of priority in the survey population. About 15% of the survey population said that alcohol/drugs is a problem. Statistically, there was no significant relation between educational status and alcohol/drugs problem. But there were significant differences from the point of gender, age group, and marital status. Table 12 presents gender differences.



Although there has been a change in the perception of women who drink more than men, this survey conforms with the conventional view that drinking is a male problem. People drink for various reasons. The Pontifical Council for the Family (1992) identified one constant basic motive: "a certain crisis of values and the person's lack of interior harmony." In my interviews, people told me that they drink to escape from problems or worries of their daily life often related to their marital status. Of those who had indicated this problem in the survey, 31.25% were separated and 22.35% were divorced. This is a higher rate than those of the never married (14.18%), married (15.23%), and widowed (4.00%).

By age group, those who belong to 35-54 years tend to have more problems with alcohol/drugs (18.24%) than the other two groups. This cannot be held as a universal phenomenon. It is said in general that alcohol/drug use cuts across social variables. A certain age group of people is more likely to use certain types of alcohol and drugs such as narcotics, sedatives, stimulants, and hallucinogens. According to one local news report, the town had the second highest per capita heroin death rate in 1996 in Florida (Richter, 1997). My interviews with the youth indicated that most of the younger people attempt to use narcotics, while the adults try for various stimulants.

### Domestic Violence

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States issued a statement on violence after their meeting in Washington in November 14-17, 1994.

The statement in brief condemned the epidemic of violence in the United States, because "violence in families, schools and neighborhoods is tearing apart the fabric of American life" (Reese, 1994). Social scientists consider violence as a social problem because it affects individuals in countless ways and disrupts society. In fact, violence can manifest itself in different forms such as suicide, criminal acts (homicide, aggravated assault, forceful rape), and domestic violence.

Domestic violence includes all kinds of violence, physical, emotional, and sexual, that occur within the home. Research carried out about 20 years ago concluded that 50% of all American couples engage in some kind of physical abuse (Steinmetz, 1977). Later studies have recorded the recurrent domestic violence in staggering numbers. In 1982, about 55 million couples experienced some form of violence in the family (Scarpitti & Anderson, 1989). An estimated three to four million women in the United States are battered each year by their husbands or partners (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992). Domestic violence was identified as the leading cause of injury among women. It is reported that such domestic violence kills at least 1,400 women a year (Carlson, 1995). There are several underlying causes of violence in the family. Several studies indicate 1) the power struggle that exists between man and women in the family, 2) the imbalance of power between men and women resulting from sociocultural practices in regard to finances, roles of authority and decision making, and 3) the frustrations that come

from working conditions, unemployment, or alcohol/drug abuse (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992).

In the survey, domestic violence did not emerge as a top priority. As indicated in Table 8 only 218 of the 1,269 respondents (17.3%) identified domestic violence as a problem and 156 of these respondents (71.6%) were women. The assumption is that most episodes of domestic violence will involve both spouses. This preponderance of women who report the problem must be explained. Why are there not an equal number of men who report the problem? Three answers can be suggested: 1) men in the sample involved in such episodes underreport it, 2) perhaps more likely, men involved in domestic violence with women are the aggressors, and 3) aggressors are less likely to go to church than victims. At any rate, the difference between the genders is highly significant ( $P < 0.001$ ), which corroborates with the national studies in which the percentage of women reporting domestic violence is higher than that of men.

Some might suspect that such violence will be more common among those with less schooling. If so, they are wrong, at least for this sample. In fact, those with an undergraduate college degree reported a slightly higher percentage of violence than those with only a high school education (18.5% as opposed to 13.9%), but the differences are too small to achieve statistical significance.

It would appear that the simple age of a person is a much better predictor of violence than his or her educational status. Only about 13% of the under-34s and the

over-55s report domestic violence, as compared to 23% of the 35-54 age group ( $P < 0.001$ ). Are we dealing with a life cycle phenomenon in which the tendency to violence increases toward mid-life and then begins to wane? Or is this simply due to differential residential arrangements? Perhaps a larger percentage of the young and the old are not living with spouses and the occasion for violence would thus be reduced. I tested this by looking only at the subsample of 865 respondents who were currently married at the time of the survey. Even among this subgroup, the tendency toward domestic violence is significantly higher ( $P < 0.01$ ) among the 35-54 age group than among the other two age cohorts. Violence does seem to increase slightly with age up to a certain point, at which point it begins to decline as one moves toward one's 60s.

Twelve percent of our respondents reported that they were separated, and 45% reported that they were divorced. The levels of violence reported (retrospectively) by these two groups are astronomically higher than the 17% for the sample at large: 75% for the separated, 52% for the divorced. It is reasonable to infer that domestic violence could have been one of the leading causes for their separation and divorce.

### Education

Education has been the primary means of cultural transmission for succeeding generations in human societies. Educators teach youth the values of society and prepare them for occupations. Social scientists report that a vast expansion of

educational institutions in the United States took place mostly in the last hundred years.

In 1890, only 7% of the relevant age group went to high school and only 1% to college. By 1970, 90% of Americans aged fourteen to seventeen were in high school, and by the 1980 a majority of Americans of college age were receiving some higher education. (Bellah et al., 1992, p.146)

Education transmits culture, but in the process it is affected by cultural forces such as the work ethic, economy, individualism, violence, and breakdown of family system. National statistics show that there is no systematic correlation between spending on education and student achievement. While expenditures on elementary and secondary education have increased more than 200% since 1960, SAT scores are reported to have declined 73 points (Bennett, 1994). According to the Congressional Quarterly, in 1940 problems in American schools were talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress-code violations, and littering. However, in 1990 the reported problems are drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault (Bennett, 1994). A 1993 survey by the U.S. Department of Education on violence in the schools indicated that there was a correlation between students' performances and parental involvements. Half of all students with poor grades indicated that their parents had spent little or no time with them on their homework in the previous week.

One-third of the students whose parents separate or divorce suffer a significant decline in their scholastic

performance. And even those families stay together suffer from a "famine" in family time, often caused by hurried parents in two-income households, multiple jobs, and long hours at the office. (Reed, 1994, p.85)

The proponents of educational reform call for increased parental and family involvement. They advocate parental choice and encouragement through vouchers and tax credits and excellence over competence. "What students at all levels badly need is the reassurance that it is admirable to pursue intellectual achievement" (Walsh, 1997, p. 17A).

Research studies focused on "Generation X," that is, those who are between 16 and 34, reveal that there is a kind of pessimism prevailing over this generation. According to the studies, about 38 million young Americans who make up Generation X are facing an uncertain labor market. This uncertainty causes pessimistic attitude toward education and its promises to create opportunity and the potential for economic advancement (Bennett, 1994).

In the survey population, 22.8% indicated that they have educational problems such as admission, finance, accommodation, examination and job searching. There was no statistical difference among females and males reporting the problem. Both experience the problem at the same level: males 22.9% and females 22.9%. However, as Table 13 indicates, when age group was applied, there was significant difference in the reporting.

TABLE 13  
Distribution of Education Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage Reported
18-34	141	38.42
35-54	98	19.22
55+	46	12.23
Total	285	
Percent of total		31.7
Chi-Square 78.5, $P < 0.001$		

The younger generation's problems related to education are to be explained in today's cultural situation. The majority of this generation come from separated or divorced families, and they suffer from the absence of supportive family structures. A disconnectedness from parental experience only increases one's problems in other areas of life. The parental involvement for these students in matters of choosing a university or a major in studies is not there. They are often left alone to make decisions. This explanation seems feasible from the fact that of those who had reported this problem, 27.16% were undergraduates and 22.48% were graduates. Those who had high school education and doctoral level education reported respectively 15.71% and 13.25%.

Of those who indicated this problem, 43.54% were never married, 16.08% married, 37.50% separated, 32.94% divorced, and 8.00% widowed. Marital status applied to education had statistical significance ( $P < 0.001$ ). According to this survey, those who are married seem to have the least amount of educational problems. This may be due to the fact that their life partners are helpful in dealing with the educational problems. There is no doubt that sharing one's problem with another is one of the ways of reducing the anxieties related to problems. However, my one-on-one interviews with some students indicated the opposite. Several married graduate students find it very difficult to cope with the demands of education and family. A total concentration upon their education is often misinterpreted by their spouses as negligence of family responsibilities. This often leads to marital discord in their families.

### Marriage and Family

In anthropological perspective, marriage can be seen as a stable coresidential relationship between individual men and women. But the specific form of marriage and kinship system may vary from culture to culture depending on how many marriage partners are involved at one time, who can marry whom, how property and descent are determined, where the family resides, and how power is distributed (Hess, Markson, & Stein, 1988). However, families play a vital role in the fabric of the sociocultural system. It is in families where individuals form emotional bonds, meet physical needs, learn about various systems of authority, power, conflict, and values.



Families were so important to the society that their "viability was supported by local communities, extended kin groups, and religious organizations, as well as by many economic, legal, and political functions and constraints" (Bellah et al., 1992, p.45).

Marriage and family have undergone dramatic changes in the contemporary world. In 1960, there were only 393,000 divorces with three out of every four marriages successful in the United States. But in 1992, the number increased to 1.2 million with six out of ten marriages ending in failure (Reed, 1994). And though divorce extricates individuals from personally unpleasant situations, its social impact has been viewed by some as quite negative.

Divorce has ripple effects that touch not just the family involved, but our entire society. As the writer Pat Conroy observed when his own marriage broke up, "Each divorce is the death of a small civilization." When one family divorces, that divorce affects relatives, friends, neighbors, employers, teachers, clergy, and scores of strangers. . . . Teachers from all over the country tell me that their students come to school wide-eyed with fear, saying that their parents quarreled the night before and asking in terror, "Does this mean that they are going to divorce?" Radical changes in family life affects all families, homes, parents, children, courtship, and marriages, silently altering the social fabric of the entire society. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p.xxi)

Family breakdown is attributed as the one source of all social ills such as drug crisis, the education crisis, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime (Bennett, 1994).

Due to family problems, the traditional nuclear family in American society is on the decline. Single-parent families are becoming more common. According to 1991

statistics, one in eight families was headed by a single-parent. And the parent, among the single-parents, is five times more likely to be a woman. In 1996, there were 15.8 million children living in single parent families. About one million children have parents who separate or divorce per year (Bennett, 1994). The U.S Census Bureau predicts that 60% of all children in the United States will lose a parent to divorce before they reach the age of eighteen (Reed, 1994). According to Bateson (1985), the new diversity in American families includes the following: a) Nuclear family--husband, wife children; b) extended family--nuclear family plus grandparents, uncles, aunts, and so on; c) blended family--husband, wife, plus children from previous marriage(s); d) common-law family--man, woman, and possibly children living together as a family, although the man and the woman have not gone through a formal legal marriage ceremony; e) single-parent family--household managed by one parent either man or woman, due to divorce, death, desertion, or never having been married; f) commune family--men, women, and children living together, often sharing rights and responsibilities, who collectively own and use property, sometimes abandoning traditional monogamous marriages; g) serial family--man and woman has succession of marriages by which they have acquired several spouses and different families over a lifetime, but had one nuclear family at a time; h) composite family--a form of polygamous marriage in which two or more nuclear families share a common husband (polygyny) or wife (polyandry) (the former is more prevalent.); i) cohabitation--a nonlegally binding arrangement between two unmarried persons of the opposite sex;

and g) gay couples--couples of the same gender who develop and maintain a homosexual relationship.

My survey focused more on the problems of marriage and family than on the diversity of families. However, the survey includes a question on the marital status of our population. The problems of marriage and family often reflect the tensions and strains placed on family relations. Therefore, I asked the participants to respond to the following family issues: 1) Relational problems with one's spouse or dating partner; 2) problems with understanding responsibility and commitment; 3) communication/conflict issues in relationship; 4) parent/child relationships; 5) problems with one's parents/ or in-laws; and 6) unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy in the family. I discuss each briefly.

#### Relational Problem with One's Spouse/ Partner

Relational problems with one's spouse or partner were reported by 42.7% of our survey population. From my one-on-one interviews, I have come to know that relational problems often have resulted from the need to cope with the social changes and cultural forces which often shape family structure. For example, both husband and wife working outside their home results in sharing roles and child rearing responsibilities. Such obligations leave very little time for the couples to attend to and to express their deepest concerns and needs for each other. The absence of mutual support and appreciation have resulted in marital discord. In this survey, I find that

TABLE 14  
Distribution of Spouse/Partner Problems, by Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage Reported
Female	350	46.48
Male	193	37.12
Total	543	
Percent of total		42.7
Chi-Square 11.0, $P < 0.001$		

the tendency to report relational problems was not equally strong among females and males. Table 14 presents gender reporting.

This difference between females and males could be explained by the assumption that the understanding of relational problem between couples or partners is different. What appears to be a problem to one person may not be a problem to the other. And the lack of understanding could be due to several factors such as communication, commitment, and so on. I discuss these factors later. There was statistical significance when I analyzed this problem under the age group ( $P < 0.001$ ). There seems to be a tendency that as people advance in their age, their relational problems seem to decrease.

Relational problems with a spouse/partner may have been the cause of separation and divorce. Of those who had reported such problems, 87.50% were separated, and 87.76% were divorced from their spouses or partners.

Does education help to improve relational problems between spouse/partner? The answer to this question would depend a great deal upon the level of education one receives. Higher levels of education would normally be expected to help the person achieve a greater degree of relationship with the spouse/partner. Against this conventional expectation, my data indicate that those with higher levels of education have greater degrees of relational problems with spouse/partner. About 35% of those who had reported this problem had high school education and 47.68% had graduate education. The statistical significance was ( $P < 0.01$ ). Relational problems with spouse or partner are closely related to the level of understanding responsibility and commitment.

#### Problems with Understanding Responsibility and Commitment

Among the survey population, 19.5% reported having problems with understanding responsibility and commitment. Although the percentage reported is secondary, the issue of responsibility and commitment in marriage is considered as an essential element of family. Lack of commitment in marriage is reported as the cause of what is called "divorce culture" in which marriage is held as an option, contingent on personal wishes, and a gateway to a more seemingly fulfilling life as opposed to the "marriage culture" that used to hold marriage as a given, forever

relationship (Bellah et al., 1985). The Catholic Church places heavy emphasis on commitment in marriage because it is a process of growth into an intimate friendship and a deepening peace. Therefore, the Church encourages married couples to pledge their love under all circumstances.

Problems with understanding responsibility and commitment were reported by 19.5% of the survey population. In gender relations, commitment in marriage should be equal. However, I found in the analysis that more males than females have indicated this problem: 22.24% were males and 17.76% were females.

Under marital status, the never-married had indicated a problem with commitment 13% more than the married. This denotes something unusual. Those who are never married consider commitment in marriage as a problem long before they are married. This could be interpreted that they either fear the "divorce culture" that seems common in the society, or are unwilling to take responsibility and commitment in marriage due to experiences they had in prior relationships. In my one-on-one interviews with parishioners, I met with a couple who had to delay their wedding because the man had serious problems with the concept "commitment." This person had been involved in previous relationships with several persons, but none of those relationships had lasted more than six months. Although he agreed to marry this woman, he was not yet sure whether this relationship would last long. It is not an uncommon thing that those who had experienced some kind of failure even in casual

TABLE 15  
Distribution of Communication Conflict Issues, by Age Group

Age group	Number	Percentage Reported
18-34	213	58.04
35-54	307	60.31
55+	179	47.23
Total	699	
Percent of total		55.4
Chi-Square 16.2, $P < 0.001$		

relationships find it hard to commit themselves in lasting relationships in marriage. Communication between couples is essential to mutual responsibility/commitment.

#### Communication/Conflict Issues

About 55% of our survey population identified communication/conflict issues in their life. These issues are often clustered around one's ability or disability to listen to one's spouse or partner and to share common concerns of the family. Social scientists indicate that the lack of communication between couples or partners could be the result of the fear of disagreement, or misunderstanding, or rejection by one's spouse or partner.

Those who are 18-34 years old and 35-54 years old seem to have more communication/conflict problems than those who are 55 and more. As indicated in Table 15, communication/conflict issues seem to decrease as people advance in age.

As it is true in several other areas, women are more likely to experience (or at least to report) communication problems than men. When this problem was viewed under the gender variable, I found statistical significance ( $P < 0.01$ ) to the effect that females (58.32%) have higher percentage rates than males (51.16%). The difference in gender might indicate that females are more inclined to acknowledge communication/conflict as an important issue in their life than males. Lack of communication between couples could have an explosive effect on their marriages. The majority of those who had reported communication as a problem in our sample belong to the separated, and divorced marital status.

There was statistical significance by educational status ( $P < 0.001$ ). Of those who had reported communication/conflict as problems, 62.02% had graduate level education. This is about 20% higher than those who had high school education. This, once again, seems to go against the conventional wisdom that higher education would enable the persons to communicate better with others. Communication is a learned skill. How much of the academic education is directed to developing the human skill of communication is a subject of discussion.

#### Parent/Child Relationship Problems

Parent/child relationship problems were reported by 44.6% of the survey population. These problems have a high order of priority at the national as well as at the local level. Coping with the demands of child rearing is acknowledged to be difficult today by social scientists. On the part of the parents, it calls for commitment,



sacrifice, hard work, and high moral values to provide for and educate children. On the part of the children, it requires obedience, respect, and responsibility to grow in human, moral, and spiritual dimensions. However, today's social and economic forces have engulfed the natural development of the parent/child relationships. According to a report published by the United States Catholic Conference (1991), more than half of mothers with children under six are in the workforce, because of the need to meet their economic needs. Almost one-fourth of the children in the United States are growing up in single-parent families, most of them headed by women. Middle class families are facing difficulties such as affording a home, obtaining quality health care, and paying for their children's education. Besides these social and economic forces, there are cultural forces that challenge the parent/child relationships in the families. The power of communication media has diminished the central position of family and family relations in the society. It is said that a child in the United States within the span of eighteen years has watched 22,000 hours of television and listened to 18,000 hours of radio broadcast (Reed, 1994).

The current distribution of single parents in our survey parishes are: St. Thomas 9.14%, St. Justin 3.94%, St. Francis 6.45%, and St. Benedict 6.11%. These problems do not exclusively pertain to the single parent or only to women. Of those who had indicated this problem, 40.46% were males and 47.34% were females. Though there is a slight increase in the percentage of females, it was not statistically significant. Men who have children, regardless of their marital status, go through

TABLE 16  
Distribution of Parent/Child Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage reported
18-34	111	30.25
35-54	271	53.03
55+	177	46.58
Total	559	
Percent of total		44.6
Chi-square 6.0, $P < 0.01$		

problems of raising their children. From the survey analysis, it appears that this problem belongs to the category of those who are in the 35-54 age group.

Table 16 indicates that the 35-54 age group, both male and female, are more involved in rearing children against the challenging socioeconomic and cultural forces than the other age groups.

Do the problems related to child rearing lead the couples to divorce? Research in family relations indicate that when children grow up, they put pressure on the family to redefine its relationships.

Many adolescents expect to be given allowances to spend as they wish, to make their own decisions about a suitable bedtime, and to listen to music that may be repellent to their parent's ears. They want to borrow the family car, sleep over at a friend's, and pursue interests other than those traditionally cared about in the family. They challenge the family's values and customs; they

insist on being treated as equals. All of this causes disequilibrium within the family system, a sense of loss, and perhaps a feeling of strangeness until new transactional patterns restore family balance. (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985, p.33)

The parents who constantly face such challenges seem to need help to keep the internal interpersonal processes that take place within a family.

#### Problems with One's Parents or In-laws

Problems with one's parent or in-laws, Table 17, are reported by 38.3% of the survey population. The sociocultural forces have impacted not only parent/child relationships but also the child/parent or in-laws relationships. There is a high degree of geographic mobility among the population. People move to find a career or advance one. Moving one's spouse and children to a new place is much less cumbersome than trying to move a three- or four-generation extended family. This necessarily implies that the elderly are left alone either in their own homes or in nursing homes. I visited one of the local nursing homes and talked to some elderly parents in order to know how they feel about their adult children. There was one common complaint "My son/daughter does not visit me as much as I wish." The sons and daughters of elderly parents are torn between the responsibilities of their nuclear family demands and parental needs. Of those who indicated having problems with their parent/in-law, 43.52% were female and 30.89% were male. The higher percentage of females might indicate that they are more likely to take responsibilities for parent/in-law than males. There was statistical significance when age groups were

TABLE 17  
Distribution of Parent/In-laws Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage Reported
18-34	145	39.62
35-54	236	46.27
55+	99	26.19
Total	480	
Percent of total		38.3
Chi-Square 37.4, $P < 0.001$		

compared to this problem. ( $P < 0.001$ ). Those who belong to the 35-54 age group seem to have more responsibility in dealing with the needs of parents or in-laws. One of the responsibilities of this age group is to relocate the elderly parents from their former place to a residence in town. Recently a couple in their 50s had to bring the husband's parents (in their 70s) to town because the husband's father had fractured his knees.

One would expect that this problem would be more prevalent in a parish where there is a large retired population. Contrary to one's expectation, St. Benedict parish, the one with the largest student body, scored a higher percentage rate in this problem. Of the 404 people who participated in our survey from St. Benedict, 179 persons, that is, about 44.75%, said that they have parent/in-law problem. It is not uncommon that students have problems with their parents in the areas of education, finance, and social relationships. Some parents who support their children financially tend to retain

control over some areas of their children's life. For example, the majority of the parents would like to know the class test scores, the whereabouts of their children on the weekend, and a small minority of them are interested in knowing whether their children attend church services on Sundays. Such controls bring about friction between parents and students.

### The Problems of Unplanned and/or Unwanted Pregnancy

The problems of unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy are in the lower order of priority in our survey population when we compare them to the national population. About 18% of the survey population indicated that they have had an unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy in the family. These problems could mean either the parents themselves are faced with pregnancy that was not well planned and was outside their economic means or the parents had to deal with a teenage daughter who became pregnant by accident (unwanted). The latter seems to be a problem at the national level. The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators shows that the rate of births to unmarried teenagers in the United States has increased almost 200% since 1960 (Bennett, 1994).

This controversial issue of unwanted pregnancy, especially among teenage girls, has been the subject of national discussion among public officials, clergy, teachers, parents, and policy makers. The modulation of the national discussion could be outlined in the words of Maryann Zihala (1996), a political instructor and freelance writer.

Teen-age girls are having sex willingly because for 30 years we have been telling them it is OK. We are still condoning their behavior when we tell them that we would prefer they abstain from sex while we hand them a condom, just in case. And we continue to take care of them and their babies when they don't take our advice about abstinence, and they don't use the condom either. . . . Children don't handle mixed messages well. What we need to do is to send a message to these children that says very clearly that pregnancy when you are a teenager is not an option. . . . Society is not going to condone your behavior anymore. We are not going to give you contraceptives and abortion counseling. We are not going to allow you to remain in your regular high school and continue your teen-age social life while your baby is in day care on another part of the campus. . . . When you choose to participate in adult behavior, you will be treated as an adult and you will be forced to accept adult responsibilities. (Zihala, 1996, p.3G)

Parents with teenagers are constantly being challenged to protect them from several social forces such as peer pressure and media influences. In a survey conducted by Mark Clements Research, Inc. among 720 girls aged 12 to 19, 91% of them said that mothers could be important influences in their life, while 76% of them rated their fathers as someone who could be "very" or "somewhat" influential in their life (Chassler, 1997).

Of those who indicated this problem in our survey, 33.72% belonged to the "divorced." This percentage is higher than all the rest of marital status groups. It could mean that these divorced persons face their own problems of pregnancy or that they are forced to handle the problems of their children who may be under their care after their marriage had ended in divorce. The later seems true in my one-on-one interview.

Divorced and single parents, mostly female, have revealed the fear and anxiety they experience when their daughters reach the age of puberty.

The middle age group indicated a higher level of this problem than the other two groups. Of those who had reported this problem, 22.50% belonged to the 35-54 year age group. Once again, this age group seems to be challenged by this problem that is so vital for the growth of their children.

### Personal Problems

There are three kinds of personal problems that we identified in our preliminary interviews with the people: 1) Problems of loneliness and/or depression, 2) Loss of job or other economic stress, and 3) Problems with self-esteem/worth. I discuss each briefly and present the data available both in the national and local level.

#### Problems of Loneliness and/or Depression

Problems of loneliness and/or depression were reported by 52.7% of our survey population. Depression is often depicted as an emotional state characterized by extreme dejection, gloomy ruminations, feelings of worthlessness, loss of hope, and apprehension. Such factors contribute to social isolation.

When you are depressed, you get so frozen in the pain of the present moment that you forget entirely that you ever felt better in the past and find it inconceivable that you might feel more positive in the future. (Burns, 1992, p.88)

It is estimated that about 35 to 40 million Americans will experience some level of depression sometime during their lives, with twice as many women as men.

TABLE 18  
Distribution of Loneliness/Depression Problems, by Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage reported
Male	231	44.51
Female	435	57.85
Total	666	52.7
Percent of total		52.7
Chi-Square 21.9, $P < 0.001$		

In the survey population, the problem of loneliness and/or depression was in a higher order of priority. More females than males reported this problem, as we see in Table 18. Social scientists attribute this gender bias to vulnerabilities (e.g., dependence) intrinsic to the traditional roles assigned to women as well as to the special stressors with which many women have to cope (e.g., full-time mother and full-time employment) in attempting to fulfill traditional role requirements (Scarpitti & Anderson, 1989).

Problems of loneliness/depression could normally be expected among those who have lost their loved ones or spouses either by divorce or death, or become chronically sick. During my one-on-one interviews, I have met several such persons who expressed some of the signs of depression such as anxiety, loss of interest, and neglect of self-care. And I expected that a higher percentage of our survey population



would belong to the age group (55 years and above) that is most likely to have this problem. Surprisingly and contrary to my expectation, I found that of those who had these problems, the highest percentage (60.05) belonged to the age group of 18-34. I made a reality check by having brief telephone interviews with some of the students known to me on campus. My telephone interviews consisted of two questions: 1) Have you been experiencing the problem of loneliness/depression recently? 2) If the answer was "yes," I asked, could you tell me the things that caused such problems for you. Out of 10 students, four students had none of these problems recently. Six students have experienced these problems; they reported the causes of the difficulties. One said it was "the breakup of a romantic affair," three said, "separation from a close friend," and two said "absences from parents and home." Problems of loneliness/depression do not belong to a particular age group; they are prevalent among persons of all ages and status.

The application of marital status to these problems indicated statistical significance ( $P < 0.001$ ). Of those who had reported these problems, 81.25% belonged to the separated, 77.65% belonged to the divorced, and 70.50% belonged to the never married. However, the married were only 43.95%. It is apparent that partnership, companionship, or friendship in marriages could be some of the contributing causes to optimism and happiness that counteract loneliness/depression in human life.

### Loss of Job

It is said that the loss of a job is the most serious problem of the work force in the United States because it disrupts the individual and family development. Many factors account for the loss of jobs such as shifts in consumer demand and priorities, government involvement, disputes between management and labor, rapidly changing technology, and discriminatory employment practices (Scarpitti & Anderson, 1989). A survey conducted by *Time* magazine (Church, 1993) asked people to respond to questions related to the loss of jobs in the United States. When people were asked "Is job security better or worse for Americans now compared to two years ago?" 66% said worse, 22% said better, and only 7% said there is no change. It is important to note here that between 1980 and 1990, according to the national surveys, more than 10 million U.S. workers had lost their jobs due to company restructuring, mergers, and acquisitions (Haughey, 1991). When the people were asked "If worse, is this job insecurity just for the short term, or will it last for many years?" Ten percent of the respondents said they were not sure, 37% said short term, but 53% said it would last for many years. The trend seems to be continuing into the 1990s. According to a survey conducted in 1994, large companies have terminated about two million jobs since 1989 (Reed, 1994). The job crisis also cuts across professional lines in the health field. A researcher at the Center for the Health Professions at the University of California at San Francisco says "... [the job losses in health care]

TABLE 19  
Distribution of Job Loss Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage reported
18-34	137	37.33
35-54	211	41.37
55+	107	28.31
Total	455	
Percent of total		35.7
Chi-Square 16.30, $P < 0.001$		

parallel what's happened in other industries. In the 80s, lower-level folks got squeezed; in the 90s, it's upper-level folks and management" (Rosenthal, 1997, p. 1A).

Table 19 shows that 53.7% of the people in the survey reported having problems with loss of job or other economic stress. There was no gender bias in reporting this problem. Females and males are equally represented in their reporting. Some 25 years ago, the situation was different when men were more in the work force than women. And this might have been a typical problem of males who worked in factories and companies. However, the situation today is different. Nearly 65% of women are said to be in the work force. The response of the people indicates that women face the same level of job loss problems as men. But, it is often reported in the media that, certain occupational risks, only for women, have been indicated as the

basis for their loss in some jobs. There was statistical significance when the age groups were compared in the problems related to job loss.

It is not surprising that the problems related to job loss find a high percentage of people among the first two age groups. It is the prime age for hunting and gathering in the modern work force. The low percentage of persons belonging to the older age group might indicate that most of them are either out of the workforce or have saved sufficient financial resources to support themselves for the rest of their lives.

Economic stress or loss of job was a higher concern among undergraduates and graduates who need to work to support their education. This concern is a widespread phenomenon in the nation. According to a Labor Department study released in 1992, 30% of each crop of graduates between then and the year 2005 will face joblessness or underemployment (Church, 1993). This problem is expected to affect the self-esteem/worth of the persons.

#### Problems Related to Self-esteem/Worth

Problems related with self-esteem/worth are closely linked to the problems of depression. Depression seems to occur when a person's strivings are thwarted, either by external forces or by absence of an appropriate goal. And depression coupled with frustration could be difficult for the person to cope with because such illnesses so often are said to lead to self-devaluation. The deprived person feels he or she has failed in some way. According to research studies, problems with self-worth/self-esteem are very common in cultures where human worth is considered equal to

human achievement. That is to say, "My worth as a human being is proportional to what I have achieved in my life" (Burns, 1992, p.327). Protestant work ethics in the United States that seem to emphasize individual effort, self-reliance, and competition in the marketplace make Americans put in such long hours that they have little time for anything else. In the last decade, working hours in the U.S. labor force increased by about 20%, from 40.6 hours a week to 48.8 hours a week, while median hours spent on leisure decreased by about a third, from 26.2 hours a week to 17.2 hours a week (Wuthnow, 1993).

In the survey population, 49.5% indicated that they have problems with self-worth/esteem. My findings show that women are not immune to workforce related concerns. Of those who had indicated this problem, 53.40% were females. That is about 10% higher than males (43.63%). It appears that women are more likely to feel the problems of self-esteem/worth after the loss or disapproval of something that they value such as job or husband. In my personal interviews, I have come across men and women who had lost their jobs because of corporate downsizing. While it was equally demanding, both for men and women, to redefine and make an emotional assessment of themselves after their job loss, I observed that it was harder for women than men. In the age groups, problems related to self-worth/esteem are higher among those who are 18-34 year and lower among those who are 55+. Table 20 presents this problem as reported by age groups.

TABLE 20  
Distribution of Self-Esteem/Worth Problems, by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage Reported
18-34	211	57.49
35-54	256	50.20
55+	155	41.01
Total	622	
Percent of total		49.5
Chi-Square 20.3, $P < 0.001$		

It is understandable that the age group 18-34 is more challenged by the sociocultural forces such as achievement and economic status than the other two age groups. Self-esteem/worth is said to have its foundation also in parental affirmation of worth and respect in the early childhood stage. In the context of today's "divorce culture," it is a missing link.

Under marital status, of those who had reported this problem, 81.25% were of the separated, 66.28% were of the divorced, and the lowest were of the married (43.76%). The statistical significance was high ( $P < 0.001$ ). People who are separated or divorced from their spouses have to re-identify themselves. They must change their former self-identity that was closely associated with their roles as wives or husbands. Those who stay married with their partners seem to have relatively less problem with self-esteem/worth.

### Personal Prayer as an Indicator of the Problems

In the preceding section I discussed the problems reported by the respondents. In a subsequent chapter, I explore to what degree those who reported the problems seek help from the pastoral staff on the problems. But from the literature on medical anthropology, we know that people may try home remedies before going to medicine men or physicians. So, in this parish setting, I hypothesized that people may try praying personally about the problem (whether at home or in church) before going to see pastoral staff about the problems. For each of the problems on the questionnaire, I asked people whether they prayed personally about that problem. In the following section I discuss their responses in this matter. Table 21 presents the number and the percentage of people who pray about the problem. I ranked the problems according to the percentage of reported personal prayer.

My survey findings on human problems seem to indicate that there are some problems that are more frequently reported than the others. Problems related to communication/conflict, loneliness, self-esteem/worth, parent/child relationship, spouse/partner relationship, parent/in-laws relationship, job loss, and health rank among the most reported in our survey population. Problems related to education, responsibility/commitment, unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, domestic violence, drugs/alcohol, and crime rank in the least reported. It is interesting to make an observation here that some vital problems of the nation rank among the least reported

TABLE 21  
 Number and Percentage of People Who Experience a Problem  
 and Pray about the Problem  
 (N=1293)

Problem Domain	No. Problems Reported	No. with Problems Who Prayed	Percent Who Prayed
Health	451	254	56.3
Spouse/Partner	548	301	54.9
Parent/Child	572	212	54.5
Job Loss	457	216	47.0
Communication/Conflict	701	305	43.5
Loneliness/Depression	674	290	43.0
Education	291	117	40.2
Self-esteem/Worth	633	246	39.0
Domestic Violence	221	78	35.3
Responsibility/Commitment	249	84	34.0
Parents/In-laws	490	163	33.2
Drugs/Alcohol	196	63	32.1
Pregnancy	227	49	21.5
Crime	189	19	10.0

problems in our sample population. From the national data, we know that the crime, drugs/alcohol, and teenage pregnancy trends are the hottest issues in the national level today.



TABLE 22  
Ranking of Problems by Frequency of Occurrence and Personal Prayer

Problem Domain	Rank Freq. Occur	Rank Personal Pray
Health	8	1
Drugs/Alcohol	13	12
Domestic violence	12	9
Parent/Children	4	3
Parent/In-laws	6	11
Pregnancy	11	13
Crime	14	14
Spouse/Partner	5	2
Job loss	7	4
Education	9	7
Loneliness/Depression	2	6
Responsibility/Commitment	10	10
Communication/Conflict	1	5
Self-esteem/Worth	3	8

As Table 21 indicates, not all high-ranking reported problems are equal objects of engagement in personal prayer. Problems related to communication/conflict ranked first in the report. However, the same ranking did not hold in personal prayer. In Table 22, I ranked the problems using the frequency of occurrence and engagement in personal prayer.

It seems that people would frequently pray for what they considered the most valuable in life. One out of two persons seems to pray frequently for health-related problems. From anthropological traditions, we know that the healers of health problems were greatly admired by the people. For example, shamans were socially recognized and approached as the specialists of rituals in the early communities. The shamans were believed to gain control over spirit beings and supernatural forces in order to identify the causes of illness and eventually to cure them. People went to the shamans when they had crises, especially sickness, with a certain amount of trust in their magical or spiritual powers. They wanted to be healed. The trend continues today. Even in the modern days of advanced medical technology, people look to their religion for healing. This trend is well documented. Data collected by a Time/CNN telephone poll taken on June 12-13, 1996, indicated that when people were asked about their belief in the healing power of God, 77% of a total 1,004 persons said "yes." Scientific evidence is escalating to say that there is a correlation between one's religious beliefs and improved health situations. According to the Time magazine report, a survey of 30 years research on blood pressure has shown that churchgoers have lower blood pressure than non-churchgoers (-5 mm lower), even when adjusted to account for smoking and other risk factors (Church, 1993). Drawing comfort and strength from one's faith has been established as the best predictor of survival among 232 heart-patients. Those who did not draw strength from their religious faith had more than three times the death rate of those who did (Church, 1993). People often

approach the priests and request prayers for various causes. But the most frequent request has been for prayers for healing of the sick.

Relational problems also seem to be the objects of frequent prayer in our sample population. In particular, relationships between spouses/partners, parent/child, children/parents or in-laws, are considered important. In my conversation with some of the local priests, I found that most of their pastoral working hours are spent helping parishioners with these problems. The diversity of other issues that are often identified in pastoral works are: disagreement on parental roles, discontent with ways of home management, disagreement on some church teachings, and church involvement.

Relational problems seem to take priority over personal problems. However, people pray over their loneliness/depression, self-esteem/worth, and other problems related to job and education. During my interviews a female single parent requested that I pray for her regaining self-confidence. She said that she was divorced two years ago. She has two children, one boy and one girl. She has a job, but the money was not enough to support the family. She receives alimony from her ex-husband by court order. From her casual conversation, I was given to understand that this woman had not yet overcome the "transition trauma" of her divorce. She was hostile to the situation, confused about her parental role, and uncertain about the future of her children. People like this single parent need help to deal with their day-to-day human problems.

In this section, I have discussed the human problems reported by the survey sample. I have ranked them by frequency of occurrence and frequency of engagement in personal prayer. The rankings indicate that 1) not all problems have equal reporting, 2) not all reported problems are equal objects of personal prayer, and 3) some problems such as relationship problems hold middle ranking both in frequency of occurrence and frequency of personal prayer. Later, I discuss whether people who reported problems sought help from the pastoral staff on these problems.

## CHAPTER 4

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

In the previous chapter, I discussed the human problems indicated by the survey population. With this chapter, I begin a description and analysis of the specifically religious dimensions of their experience. Ethnographies of religious systems often subdivide this important cultural system into at least three constituent subsystems: religious beliefs, religious rituals (or ceremonies), and religious specialists. These subsystems can be seen as universal or virtually universal components of religious systems. All religious systems have spirit beliefs of one sort or another, rituals to influence or otherwise interact with these spirits, and specialists who are viewed as more skilled or authorized to deal with the spirit world.

In this chapter I focus on the beliefs of the respondents I interviewed and surveyed. In subsequent chapters I deal with their religious practices and with the religious specialists from whom they seek help.

Belief in spirits is a fundamental element in a religious system. The term "animism" describes the belief of the preliterate cultures (Tylor, 1871). According to animistic beliefs, early peoples believed that the human being was constituted of two elements, the body and the soul. They believed that not only individuals have souls, but also animals and plants. The souls of humans, animals, and plants continue to

exist after the physical being ceases to exist (Wallace, 1966). Belief in supernatural forces was characterized in Mana (Marett, 1901), Totem (Durkheim, 1961), and Taboo (Kroeber, 1920/1979).

With the emergence of evolutionary theory in the 19th century, scholars began speculating as to the evolution of religion. These speculations were given an empirical base in the work of Swanson (1962), who presented evidence that the spirit world (or rather the nature of human belief in the spirit world) has evolved in tandem with the evolution of the human sociopolitical systems. Swanson traces a progression from belief in zoomorphic spirits to anthropomorphic spirits to high gods to the eventual emergence of monotheistic belief in a Supreme Being. This shift in the nature of the spirit world parallels a shift from hunting-gathering to agriculture and, eventually, to the highly stratified sociopolitical systems of early agrarian states. The spirit world, in Swanson's view, to some degree mirrors the sociopolitical world in which the believers function.

Roman Catholicism emerged in the context of the Roman Empire, and it is, thus, not surprising that it is characterized by a monotheistic belief system. (Contrary to certain intersectorian stereotypes, Catholic Trinitarian beliefs do not entail belief in three gods. In Catholicism there is only one God, one divine nature, which has three manifestations.) Catholicism, like all other religions, has categories of beliefs. These beliefs are given expressions in the ritual practices which I discuss in Chapter 5. To anticipate, I classify the practices into the core Catholic Sacraments, the

Catholic sacramentals, and the general Christian practices. Each of these practices, however, is in some way linked to a belief or beliefs. For example, the ritual of Mass itself calls forth belief in the spiritual reenactment of the death and resurrection of Jesus who now becomes the spiritual food for the faithful. The readings from the scriptures in the Mass offer several models or paradigms for the participants. For example, the story of the man born blind who received sight from Jesus may inspire the participants to make their belief in Jesus to obtain a new vision of the meaning of life. Even the general Christian practice of saying Grace at meals may remind the person about the benevolent nature of God and His providence. Such beliefs, according to Newman and Pargament (1990), could provide the person with emotional support and interpretation of the meaning of human problems in religious terms.

Because practices make sense (at least emically) only in terms of the beliefs that rationalize them, I dedicate this chapter to a discussion of the Catholic beliefs among the survey population and, later, I present an analysis on the level of religious beliefs and practices. The purpose of this analysis would be to indicate what percentage of the survey population use their religious beliefs and practices to interpret, explain, and validate the human problems that they face in life.

### Catholic Beliefs: A Brief Overview

Catholic beliefs have developed through the centuries in response to the needs of the different eras in the Church. It would be beyond my present scope to get into

the historical developments of such beliefs. For a comprehensive overview of the Catholic beliefs, I classified them into three groups: 1) Beliefs concerning the nature of the spirit world, 2) ethical and moral beliefs, and 3) beliefs concerning certain traditional Church regulations.

With respect to beliefs about the spirit world, I restrict my discussion to five core items: 1) The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, 2) The Virginal Conception of Jesus, 3) The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, 4) Life after Death, and 5) The Eternity of Hell. I present a discussion of official and traditional Catholic teachings about each of these items. I then compare and contrast the official teaching with the beliefs indicated by our respondents.

Similarly, under the topic of ethical and moral beliefs, I have singled out six items for analysis: 1) premarital sex, 2) extra-marital sex, 3) divorce and annulments, 4) the use of contraceptives, 5) homosexuality, and 6) abortion. Finally, with respect to ecclesiastical practice-regulations, I have singled out two items that are traditional practices in the Catholic Church and are currently arenas of public controversy: 1) priestly celibacy and 2) the male Catholic priesthood.

#### Core Catholic Beliefs with Regard to the Spirit World

The doctrinal nature of the Catholic beliefs is said to consist in the official approval of the Church either by way of an ecumenical council (Vatican II) or by a Pope, or by a body of bishops with the Pope (synod). The sources of such beliefs are the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition. Catholics believe that the revelation of God is



contained not only in written books (Scriptures), but also in the unwritten traditions that the disciples of Jesus received from Jesus himself and handed on. The Vatican II documents reiterated the link that exists between the Scriptures and Tradition.

There exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. . . . Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence. (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, II, p.9)

I next focus on the 5 core beliefs which I have singled out for analysis.

### The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist

The Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist has its historical foundation in the words of Jesus recorded in the first century.

I am the bread of life. . . . I am the living bread that has come down from Heaven. . . . For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. (John, 6:48-58)

This decisive promise of the Real Presence of Jesus is believed to find its fulfillment in the Eucharist at the last supper in the very words of Jesus: "This is my body and my blood."

The Catholic Church has maintained the presence of Jesus in several ways. The Church believes that Jesus is present in his words, in his Church's prayer, in the

poor, in the Sacraments, in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the priest who celebrates the Mass in the parish. However, Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist is believed to be unique. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) says that,

in the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained. (No: 1374, p.346)

From the year 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist in the Catholic Church came to be known by the term "transubstantiation," which means that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus. Down through the centuries, Catholics have upheld this belief of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist on the ground of the efficacy of the Word of Jesus and of the action of the Holy Spirit to bring about the transubstantiation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No: 1375). Table 23 shows the breakdown of the belief by gender and age groups.

A New York Times/CBS national poll conducted on April 21-23 in 1994 pointed out the general direction of Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. According to the survey, almost two-thirds of American Catholics seemed to believe that the bread and wine used in Mass are sacred symbols of Christ, rather than the real body and blood of Christ (Steinfels, 1995). However,

TABLE 23  
Responses to the Teaching That Christ Is  
Physically (Real) Present in the Eucharist

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	56.1	58.6
% disagree	43.9	41.4
35-54		
% agree	62.4	61.9
% disagree	37.6	38.1
55+		
% agree	67.3	76.8
% disagree	32.7	23.2

the Roper poll, conducted in the beginning of 1997, showed a reversal trend in the Eucharistic belief. Sixty-two percent of the respondents said that they strongly believe that the bread and wine used in Mass are really transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ (Lawler, 1997).

The responses revealed that there is a tendency for adherence to traditional beliefs in the real presence to be stronger in the older age groups. Table 23 above indicates that males and females hold similar beliefs except in the older age groups, where females are more traditional in their beliefs. Nearly half, both male and female in the age group 18-34, seem to believe in the symbolic rather than the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is a departure from the traditional belief that

distinguished Catholicism from the other denominations of Christianity. Several studies have suggested that due to cultural assimilation, Catholics are becoming indistinguishable from the rest of the population. This departure from the traditional belief in the Eucharist could be analyzed as a threat, even from a purely anthropological perspective, to the distinct Catholic identity of future parishes. The overall data seems to indicate that the core belief that has distinguished Catholics from Protestants is in the process of being jettisoned among the post-Vatican II generation.

Can we interpret the age differences in Table 23 in a life cycle framework? Perhaps the younger generation, about half of whom now reject traditional belief, might embrace traditional belief in the Eucharist when they grow older. According to some of the respondents, this interpretation seems highly unlikely. The mechanisms for effecting a change toward distinguishing traditional belief seem to be missing: the absence of parents to teach the children in the families, the shortage of the priests and religious to teach in the parish level, and the disappearance of Catholic schools in the national level. This suggests that Catholicism is dealing, not with a life cycle phenomenon, but with a secular and probably unidirectional trend.

### The Virginal Conception of Jesus

On Sundays and Holy days of obligation, Catholics make profession of faith through a formal formula called the "credo." One element contained in the "credo"

is that Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary, which means that Jesus was conceived without the intervention of a human father.

The foundation for this belief is traced to the Gospel writings of the first century. Matthew, one of the gospel writers, says in the Infancy Narration (Jesus' birth story) "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt.1,20). The Catholic Church interprets Mary's virginal Conception of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise seen in the Old Testament, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Is. 7,14). This traditional understanding of this doctrine remains an integral part of the Catholic belief that preserves the unity of the divine and the human in Jesus: that He was truly divine (role of the Holy Spirit) and human (role of the Blessed Virgin Mary).

Another litmus test of Catholic belief is the conception and birth of Jesus. Belief in the virginal Conception of Jesus is fundamental to Catholicism and to many Protestant churches. National polls have not included this question in their surveys for the possible reason that this belief marks the "party line." The belief that Jesus was conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit (without human input) has been a core teaching of the Church since its inception. Anyone professing or even believing differently would have been labeled as non-Catholic. I included this question in the survey to ascertain how many participants would respond to the traditional teaching on this matter. Table 24 presents the distribution by gender and age groups.

TABLE 24  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Jesus Was Conceived without Male Input

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	81.5	86.9
% disagree	18.5	13.1
35-54		
% agree	81.3	79.4
% disagree	18.7	20.6
55+		
% agree	80.3	88.2
% disagree	19.7	11.8

Table 24 shows that adherence to the belief in Mary's virginal conception of Jesus is much stronger than adherence to belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. A vast majority of respondents said that they believe in the Virginal Conception of Jesus. However, a very small percentage of respondents across all age groups and between gender responded that they disagree about it. Motivated by personal curiosity, I contacted 10 persons of different age groups in the parishes to know exactly the meaning of "disagreement" about this belief. Their responses were: "I don't understand it," "It was not explained to us," "I passively accept it," "It does not affect me personally," and "It is above my head." Three out of five of these persons indicated the lack of teaching in this belief.

### The Resurrection of Jesus

Though differing in their details, all four Gospels affirm that Jesus was executed on a Friday and rose from the dead the following Sunday morning. The Resurrection of Jesus has been accepted as central to Christian faith and preaching from the early centuries. St. Paul, after his conversion, wrote to the faithful at Corinth around the year 56 "if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing is useless" (1 Cor:15,14). The basis of this belief is ascertained in the experience and witness of the disciples of Jesus. The New Testament is replete with the witnesses of disciples who are said to have seen and touched and checked the traces of Jesus' crucifixion. The disciples gave witness that Jesus appeared to them with the same body that had been tortured and crucified, but at the same time they have recorded events that testify that the risen body of Jesus was different. It was a glorified body, not limited by space and time.

The belief in the Resurrection of Jesus has been the hope of believer's resurrection. Catholics believe that Jesus by His resurrection has opened the way to a New Life, meaning Heaven. Such a belief has demanded from Christians a committed life and a break away from all that would damage the spiritual relation with Jesus: "Those of us who die and are buried with him will also rise with him to a new life" (Rom.6,3). Let us examine the response of the participants in Table 25.

There is a third "litmus test" belief of the traditional Christian: belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, as per the accounts in all four Gospels is held very

TABLE 25  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Jesus Rose Physically from the Dead

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	70.5	77.4
% disagree	29.5	22.6
35-54		
% agree	83.6	78.0
% disagree	16.4	22.0
55+		
% agree	75.3	86.0
% disagree	24.7	14.0

important in the Catholic Church because it reveals the divine side of Jesus, as well as it serves as a pattern for the believer's own resurrection. Our survey indicates that majority believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus. However, among those who belong to the 18-34 age group, almost every three out of five tend to believe that Christ's resurrection was only spiritual. It is not surprising that this age group, immersed in the culture of science and enquiry, would find it hard to accept the religious beliefs as a matter of reality or fact.

In an age where human beings are striving to predict and control events, Catholic belief in the resurrection seem to serve as a principle to predict believer's new state of life after death. During my visits with the patients in terminal illness, I



have seen how they viewed their suffering and pain in the light of their belief in the resurrection of Jesus. They drew much spiritual strength from their belief that one day their physical suffering and pain will disappear when they are able to be with the Risen Lord.

### Life after Death

Belief in the immortality of the human soul is one of the articles of the Catholic creed. Stated succinctly: the body dies and dissolves, the soul continues to live, and body and soul will again be united at the end of the world. The Scriptures contain several images that refer to the eternal life: life, light, wedding garment, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, and paradise. The Church uses these images in rituals and prayers constantly to remind its faithful to live a life of union with God. For example, in the ritual of Baptism, the person is clothed with a white garment with the following words,

you have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into everlasting life of Heaven. (Rite of Baptism, No: 12)

The Catholic Church believes that a state of grace is a necessary requirement for the life everlasting, and teaches that, "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, and definitive happiness" (Catechism

TABLE 26  
Responses to the Teaching That  
the Human Soul Continues to Live after Death

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	87.4	90.7
% disagree	12.6	9.3
35-54		
% agree	90.4	89.4
% disagree	9.6	10.6
55+		
% agree	85.3	90.8
% disagree	14.7	9.2

of the Catholic Church, 1994, No:1024, p.267). Table 26 shows the respondents' belief in life after death.

Survey results corroborate with the National survey conducted by Time/CNN on March 1997. When asked "Do you believe in the existence of Heaven, where people live forever with God after they die?" 81% of the people nationwide said "yes" (Biema, 1997, p.73). The percentages in the sample across all ages and between gender are even a little higher than the national percentage. However, it is important to note that 14.7% of males, belonging to the age group 55+ disagreed with the belief in life after death. One would expect that as people grow older, they would be stronger in their belief in life after death. From my conversation with the people of

this age group, I found that the possible reasons not to believe in life after death among this group are 1) they live with the anxiety about the nearness of death, and they are afraid of death because they are not sure about their faith, and 2) they desire to live longer here. Life after death does not make a lot of sense. This life is seen as fun and beautiful. And when they are about to die, they hope that somehow they will be saved through modern medicine and life support technology.

I discovered some common feelings among the people, especially of the older generation, that they do not hear much about life after death in the sermons, except when they attend the funeral services of their loved ones. When I asked the question “would you like to hear more about things that would happen after death?” the response was positive. However enjoyable and beautiful this life is, the ultimate question of human life (what is after death?) seems an inevitable thing to be addressed here on earth. Religion and religious specialists both ordained and non-ordained may serve as agents to explain and interpret future life after death in the light of religious beliefs and teachings.

### The Eternity of Hell

The Catholic belief affirms the existence of Hell and its eternity. It is a traditional belief that those who die in a state of mortal sin will suffer the punishment of Hell.

The chief punishment of Hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No:1035, p.270)

The Catholic Church bases the eternity of Hell on the words of Christ's prediction of the last judgment. The scene is presented in the Gospel of Matthew, 25:34-41, where Christ as Judge would say to those unjust, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Implicit in the Catholic belief in Hell and its eternity is the exercise of human free will to choose. Human persons have the freedom to accept or reject God and so face eternal destiny of Heaven or Hell. The Church in its ritual prayers often prays for the mercy of God upon His people for the reason that God does not want anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No:1037). The acceptance of eternal punishment doctrine may add seriousness to one's moral responsibilities and decisions. Table 27 shows the distribution of the respondents.

In the Time/CNN national survey, 60% of the survey population responded positively when they were asked, "Do you believe in Hell, where people are punished forever after they die?" (Biema, 1997, p.73). However, in our survey, nearly 60% of the respondents across all ages and between gender disagreed even when the question was presented in a manner that implied individual freedom. This is an important departure from the traditional belief of the Catholic Church. I learned from my inter-

TABLE 27  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Those Who Die in Grave Sin Will Spend Eternity in Hell

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	41.7	41.2
% disagree	58.3	58.8
35-54		
% agree	45.8	41.2
% disagree	54.2	58.8
55+		
% agree	47.3	46.0
% disagree	52.7	54.0

views with different people of different age groups the possible reasons for such a departure. The older age group said, "We grew up with the thought of 'fear of God.' We were taught that God will punish us if we do anything wrong. But now we hear that God cannot punish us no matter what we do. He is a God of love and not a God of punishment. But some of us still believe that God will reprimand us if we do wrong things. We need to do good things, and they will pay off." One person of this group added humorously that "Hell cannot be worse than what we are experiencing. We are already paying here."

The belief of the younger generations seem to be impacted by the cultural ingredients such as: "discussion," "understanding," "sharing," and "forgiving." One

person of this group said, “My parents do not punish me. They want me first to talk and explain why I did wrong. When I say ‘sorry,’ they forgive me. I think God will do the same thing.” Several persons of this group are inclined to refuse to believe that God will send anyone to Hell.

There seems to be a shift of emphasis from the “fear of God” to “love of God” in the sermons and educational programs in the parishes. However, the shift of emphasis seems to have created the denial of the “fear of God” that has been identified as the beginning of wisdom in Judeo-Christian tradition. From the part of the Church, the purpose in the shift of emphasis (love of God) is not to allow anyone to do anything (sin), rather to motivate people to do things for God out of love and personal responsibility, because God loved us first (1 John 4: 18-19).

If we compare Table 27, in which the majority deny the existence of Hell, with the preceding, in which an overwhelming majority affirm the existence of an after life, we see that about 60% of the respondents across all age groups have a belief that seems to guarantee them happiness in Heaven no matter what they do on Earth.

#### Catholic Beliefs: Ethical or Moral Nature

The beliefs discussed in the preceding section were doctrinal in nature. I now examine responses to opinions and beliefs about ethical and moral issues. Catholic morality is founded on the firm conviction that the norms for good and bad human behaviors were given by God. Humans are obligated to discover those norms and live accordingly. The norms of human behaviors are revealed through God’s creation

(natural law) and God's revelation (religion). The natural law implies the purposes or goals which are inherent in creations because God made them. The Church teaches that "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid on himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment" (Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, No:16). The norms based on God's revealed words, formulated by religion, are meant to clarify, build, and reinforce this natural moral sense of human persons. For example, the New Testament has many examples of Jesus preaching and reinforcing the moral norms of the Ten Commandments. He set many higher standards of behavior than the Old Testament prescribed for His followers (Mt. 5:20-22).

It is a Catholic doctrine that the moral quality of human actions depends on three sources: 1) the object chosen, 2) the intention, and 3) the circumstances of the action. These three constitutive elements compose the morality of human behaviors. The role of conscience is considered as an important means of apprehending and interpreting moral human behavior. In the Catholic tradition, conscience is defined as the human ability to judge one's own behavior as closely as possible to how God sees it. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church asserts, "Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them" (No:1786, p.

440). Therefore, the Church insists upon the education of the conscience as a lifelong task that begins at home.

Christian moral norms, in general, are permeated by the spirit of commandments of the love of God and of neighbor. This law of love, when practiced in life, is said to fulfill all the moral norms that a Christian is expected to observe. I briefly discuss here some beliefs that are of moral nature.

### Nonmarital Sexuality

Nonmarital sexuality here means premarital, extramarital, and homosexual relations. Catholic teaching regarding sexuality is the domain that is perhaps most commented on, critiqued, and parodied by the media and entertainment industry. It is useful to discuss briefly what the Church teaching actually is.

Human sexuality is seen as a gift from God whose principal function is the continuation of the human race. This belief is supported by the Scripture passage "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it'" (Gen. 1:27-28). Hence, the purpose of the sexual act in marriage is procreation and expression of essential mutual love between the spouses. Any sexual act outside of marital relations (premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexual acts) is always considered wrong.

The essential reproductive function of marriage is viewed as unfolding in the context of a voluntary and permanent covenant between a man and a woman. Keeping



with the biblical and traditional understanding of human sexuality in the context of marriage, the Catholic Church continues to teach the essential nature of marriage as an irrevocable and faithful covenant which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from each other (The Rite of Marriage, 1970).

Premarital sex or fornication as the voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons was forbidden from the beginning of Christianity. The teachings of Christian sexual morality often make references to the St. Paul's letters to the people at Corinth who seem to have had problems with the demands of Christian morality. The central message of such references is that acts of fornication are deviations from the divine will. The Church, having become aware of the increased climate of sensuality today, admonishes the youth that

chastity before marriage is the best preparation for fidelity in marriage; and that the selfless love that is cultivated between the man and woman who plan to marry is the only love that can sustain them through life after they are married. (Hardon, 1981, p. 382)

Extramartial sex often refers to the act of adultery, and adultery in the Church is considered marital infidelity. The Catholic Church has traditionally used the union between Christ and his Church as a sign to encourage the couples to stay in love and fidelity. Through the Sacrament of Marriage, the couples are enabled to represent this fidelity and give witness to it. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) states that those who commit adultery fail in their fidelity and transgress the rights of the other spouse (1994, No:2381, p.572).

Even more so than in teachings on premarital sex, the Church's official teachings on homosexuality set it at militant odds against the mass media and government. Whereas contemporary society, at least as presented in the media and in official government policy, views homosexuality as a valid sexual orientation, the Catholic tradition has consistently declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and sinful. The condemnation derives from the following reasons: they are contrary to the natural law (Rom, 1:27); they close the sexual acts to the gift of life; and they do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994.) Following this declaration of the Church, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the United States said that homosexual acts are "a grave transgression of the goals of human sexuality and of human personality, and are consequently contrary to the will of God" (Catholic Bishops Conference of the United States, 1973, p.3).

The Church, however, makes a distinction between homosexual acts and homosexual orientation. The former are viewed as objectively disordered and wrong. The latter is in itself, however, not viewed as sinful, as it may be beyond the voluntary control of the individual. Although the Church's condemnation of homosexual acts is severe, it advises the priests to treat men and women who have deep seated homosexual tendencies with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.

The attitudes of American Catholics on sexual matters have gone in directions quite different from official Church teachings. Earlier studies in human sexuality

TABLE 28  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Premarital Sex Is Sinful

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	41.4	46.1
% disagree	58.6	53.9
35-54		
% agree	51.6	45.4
% disagree	48.4	54.6
55+		
% agree	68.0	75.7
% disagree	32.0	24.3

indicated that there was a significant decline in objections to premarital sexuality among Catholics. For example, Pierre Hegy (1993) reported that the Catholics who considered premarital sex as always wrong dropped from 38% in 1972 to 18% in 1990. Approval of premarital sex among Catholics went from 21% to 44%.

My survey results agree with these earlier studies. Table 28 shows the majority of those 18-34 disagree that premarital sex is sinful. Research studies on youth and sexuality suggest that this age group lives under enormous peer pressure, responding to a mentality that says, "Everybody is doing it, just do it." In my one-on-one interviews, I met with students who come from strong, traditional Catholic families, yet

they struggle to make decisions as to whether they should remain chaste until marriage or succumb to social pressures for premarital sex.

In my data, I find disagreement with Church teaching on premarital sex among all age groups. Even in the most traditional group, those 55 or older, one out of three rejected Church teaching on the sinfulness of premarital sex. One might assume that those who agree with Church teaching on this matter have retained values that were taught to them in their childhood. However, my one-on-one interviews suggested that in some cases, adherence to Church teaching derives at least in part from their dissatisfaction with what they view to be the fruits of adherence to a libertine philosophy. Older respondents lived through the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and early the 1970s and some admitted to having been active participants therein. Their experiences were not of liberation but of guilt and inner tension, and they would like to protect their children and grandchildren from these negative experiences. Several parents engage in dialogue with their children in order to educate them on the value of abstinence until marriage.

However, there appears to be a difference between these middle-aged or older former participants in the sexual revolution and younger Catholics. When the former joined the sexual revolution in their youth, they did so with a sense that they were doing something wrong. Today’s youth, in contrast, simply reject Church teaching on this matter of premarital sex. Many of them have fully adapted to contemporary

TABLE 29  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Extramarital Sex Is Sinful for Married People

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	98.0	99.5
% disagree	2.0	0.5
35-54		
% agree	96.9	92.5
% disagree	3.1	7.5
55+		
% agree	96.8	98.6
% disagree	3.2	1.4

American norms which view sexual contact between boyfriends and girlfriends as totally natural and innocent.

Several national polls have indicated that marital fidelity is still the norm for the majority of Americans (Woodward, 1993). A majority of my respondents agree that extramarital sex is sinful for married people (Table 29). The percentage of those who agree is greater in the 18-34 group than in the other two age groups. This might suggest that the children or the grandchildren have experienced the impact of the infidelity of marriage in their parents or grandparents lives. Infidelity often results in divorce and the victims of such divorces are the children. Due to divorces, several of these children are raised by a divorced single parent or by grandparents. A very

conservative attitude towards extramarital sexuality among this age group, therefore, might have resulted from the negative outcome of their personal problems witnessed in their parents' life.

There is a discrepancy between responses to extramarital sex and to premarital sex. Whereas six out of ten of the younger group, and half of the middle-aged group, disagree with Church teaching on premarital sex and say that it can be acceptable under certain circumstances, there is almost total rejection of extramarital sex among all age groups. Why? I suspect that it is not a matter of differential adherence to Church teaching on two different matters, but rather, stated more simply, a matter of full adherence to the modern trends on both issues. As mentioned above, though there is widespread acceptance of premarital sexuality in mainstream American society, there is continued rejection of extramarital affairs.

From my conversation with some of those 35-54, I learned that there is very low tolerance among the public for infidelity in marriage. Irresponsible behaviors are discussed on national television and laws are enforced to protect the rights of those affected by spousal infidelity. One of the people from this interview said, "In the past, nobody talked about extramarital affairs. It was private and taboo to speak out. But today nothing is private. Everything is out there in the air. In a way, it helps to learn and discipline ourselves." Table 30 presents the distribution of respondents on the issue of homosexuality.

TABLE 30  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Homosexual Acts Are Inherently Sinful

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	60.3	48.6
% disagree	39.7	51.4
35-54		
% agree	67.9	49.3
% disagree	32.1	50.7
55+		
% agree	77.1	78.4
% disagree	22.9	21.6

The responses to homosexuality show an ambivalence that is neither the full rejection that is found toward extramarital sex nor the widespread tolerance, at least among younger groups, on the issue of premarital sex. A majority of all age groups reject homosexuality, a rejection that increases with older groups.

The tendency for adherence to the Church teaching that homosexual acts are inherently sinful is stronger among males across all ages except in the older age group. Nearly half of the women respondents disagreed with the Church teaching. My interview with 12 women of the age groups 18-34 and 35-54 revealed that some of them tend to be less critical and more sympathetic towards those who are in homosexual relations with the assumption that "they may be born with that kind of

orientation.” Two of them said, “It is not for us to condemn these people. It is a matter of personal choice and life.”

My interviews with the males of different age groups indicated that the male agreement with the Church’s teaching that homosexual acts are inherently sinful was strongly supported by their fear of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. One of the men who belongs to the older age group said, “I don’t want anything to do with it. It is a disaster that homosexuals are spreading the AIDS in the country. It is better to stay away from homosexuality. The Church is right.” It may be that people adhere to the teachings of the Church when the teaching touches the core life issues such as health and survival.

### Divorce and Annulment

The Catholic belief in marriage is claimed to be founded on the original intention of the creator revealed in the Sacred Scriptures: “The Lord God said: ‘It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.’ . . . That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body” (Gen.2:18-19,24). Again, in the New Testament, Jesus himself reiterated, “At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined” (Mark 10: 6-9). The Church declares this union indissoluble. That is to say, that a marriage between the baptized persons which is ratified and consummated cannot be



dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death (Canon Law: 1141). The Church has traditionally considered divorce immoral, because it causes disorder in the family especially to deserted spouses and to the children of the union.

For the reasons discussed above, it is not in the practice of the Church to grant divorce to its members. However, the Church grants annulments, which are ecclesiastical declarations stating that a real marriage never existed. Such annulments are granted only after an investigation proving that no marital bond of a Sacramental nature ever existed, due to an impediment such as lack of discretion, lack of competency in conjugal life, coercion, and fear. Some might be inclined to think that "annulments" are the same as divorces. The Catholic Church rejects this opinion and believes that divorce is a mere legal arrangement pertaining to the property and custody of the children. It cannot destroy the spirituality of the original bond of marriage contracted between the spouses. Table 31 presents the respondents' attitude toward divorce and annulments.

The survey indicates that there is a tendency for the split from the teaching that divorce is prohibited and annulments should be restricted to be strong across all age-groups. The gender bias indicates that more women than men oppose prohibition of divorce and restriction of annulments in the Church. This implies that women who are the victims of divorce and seek another marriage in order to support the children and themselves tend to be less willing to accept the Church's prohibition and restriction than men who are in the same situation.

TABLE 31  
Responses to the Teaching That Divorce Is Prohibited  
and Annulment Should Be Restricted

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	48.9	32.3
% disagree	51.1	67.7
35-54		
% agree	27.0	17.6
% disagree	73.0	82.4
55+		
% agree	24.4	23.4
% disagree	75.6	76.6

Table 31 indicates that this is one area in which the younger age group is more in accord with the Church's teaching than the older age group. This might suggest that this age group has experienced the negative impact of the parents' divorce. Those who are 55 years and above might still have the negative vestiges of divorces on family life. The phenomenon of divorce and remarriage, which were reported to be common in the society in the 1970s, were not exempted from age group. Several studies suggest that by the 1970s, divorce rates among Catholics were beginning to be like those of the other Christians. Today, the divorce rates among Catholics are reported to be about the same as those of all Americans. The consequences of a divorce are

reported to be disappointment, low self-esteem, and feelings of guilt. My one-on-one interviews indicated that there are persons in parishes who are divorced for no fault of their own, are deeply troubled by Church regulations regarding Sacraments, especially reception of Communion in the Mass. The Church prohibits those divorced persons from receiving Communion in the Mass, because divorce is seen to contradict that union of love between Christ and His Church, which is signified by the celebration of the Eucharist.

### The Use of Contraceptives

The use of contraceptives here means the intentional application of material obstruction to the conception of a human being. The commonly used such material objects are pills, an intrauterine device, contraceptive foam, or a condom. The Catholic Church believes and teaches that the conjugal act has two inherent dimensions: 1) unitive dimension means the reciprocal self-giving of the spouses, and 2) procreative dimension

means the procreative aspect of matrimony. These two dimensions are inseparable.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) states this,

A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of the mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. The Church, which "is on the side of life," teaches that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life. (No: 2366. p.569)

TABLE 32  
Responses to the Teaching That  
the Use of Contraceptives Is Sinful

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	14.2	11.3
% disagree	85.8	88.7
35-54		
% agree	13.5	10.7
% disagree	86.5	89.3
55+		
% agree	28.0	27.7
% disagree	72.0	72.2

Since the use of contraceptives is found to render procreation impossible, they are declared intrinsically evil (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968, No:12). Table 32 presents the respondents' attitude toward the use of contraceptives. The table shows that a vast majority of our respondents disagree with the Catholic teaching that the use of contraceptives is sinful. In the older age group, males and females hold a similar level of disagreement, whereas, in the age group of 18-34 and 35-54, more females are in disagreement with the Church teaching than males. These survey findings corroborate findings of a National survey conducted by the Roper Center in late January 1997. When the survey respondents were asked to state their agreement or disagreement to

the following: "It is morally wrong to use artificial methods of birth control," 22% agreed and 73% disagreed.

The earlier surveys demonstrated that the use of contraceptives has been the subject of controversy in the American Catholic Church since 1968 when the papal encyclical "*Humanae Vitae*" was released from the Vatican. My conversation with people of different ages indicated that the reasons for which they disagree from the Church teaching varies from person to person. Three persons who were 55+ years said, "In our time we did not have options. We practiced the rhythm method, but it had its failures. We struggled through hard times, but we don't want our children and grandchildren to experience similar things. They should have the options to use or not to use the contraceptives in order to plan their families." Another person of the 35-54 age group said. "To me, the use of contraceptives is a personal and responsible behavior. It is very immediate to me. So I should have the freedom to decide about it." The views of those of 18-34 age group were different: "Now with two-career lifestyles, we find it difficult to have more than one or two children in our life. Our parental obligation to our children is the top priority in our life. We want to raise them. We want to educate them. We cannot afford to have more children. The Church cannot impose on us what we cannot practice in life." (Here the implication was to the use of contraceptives). These statements tend to be at odds with the Church's teaching, especially on the inseparable nature of conjugal acts discussed above.

## Abortion

The Catholic Church has consistently expressed the belief that human life begins at conception and any direct attempt to expel an immature fetus from the mother's womb is the sin of murder. The earliest teaching of the Church on abortion is found in the document called "The Didache" (c. 80 A.D.) saying to the Christians: "You shall not procure abortion. You shall not destroy a newborn child" (Hardon, 1981, p.334). The same teaching continued to the twentieth century when, in 1974, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Catholic Faith declared:

Respect for human life is called for from the time that the process of generation begins. From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor of the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already. (Declaration on Procured Abortion, III, No:12)

The Church bases its moral teaching on abortion from the Scriptures as well as from the constitutive rights of individuals in a civil society. The recent official Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) quotes from an Old Testament to support its position: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer.1,5). The Church continues to insist on the inalienable rights of human persons saying,

These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act,

from which the person took origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death. (No:2273, p.548

Table 33 presents the responses toward abortion, an issue that has been even more polemical than the issue of homosexuality in the United States. It has been divisive both within and without the Church. A Time/CNN Poll taken in September 1995 indicated that 79% of the Catholics expressed their view that they (not the Church) should make up their minds on such issues as birth control and abortion

TABLE 33  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Abortion Entails the Killing of an Innocent Human Life

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	73.3	72.5
% disagree	26.7	27.5
35-54		
% agree	76.1	66.7
% disagree	23.9	33.3
55+		
% agree	79.4	81.7
% disagree	20.6	18.3

(Gray, 1995). A recent poll conducted by the Roper Center disclosed that 59% of Catholics disagreed with the survey statement "abortion is never justified."

My survey result indicates that a vast majority of our respondents across all age groups agree with the Church teaching that abortion entails the killing of an innocent human life. This contrasts sharply with responses on the issue of the use of contraceptives. A vast majority of the same population disagreed with the Church teaching that the use of contraceptives is sinful. One potential explanation could be that people are trying to stop the conception of human being through contraceptives rather than later to abort the fetus. This assumption was supported from my one-on-one interviews with those who had to face such problems. In one case, the person reported that the attempt to avoid conception failed and that pregnancy was certain. The same person showed total willingness to deliver the child and raise it despite opposition. Abortion was not a morally acceptable choice for this person.

My survey also indicates disagreement with the Church's teaching on abortion. One out of three females in the age group of 35-54 disagree with the statement that abortion entails the taking of an innocent human life. From my conversations with the persons of this age group, I inferred that four women of this age group tended to assume that the opposition to abortion equaled denial of their rights. This assumption seems to be the cause of variability of opinions among this group.



### Catholic Beliefs: Traditional Nature

There is one final cluster of beliefs on which I analyzed respondents: those concerning certain Church regulatory traditions that are known to have arisen long after the Apostolic period but which traditionally had the same obligatory weight as scripturally derived regulations. As I have already indicated, the Apostolic Tradition in the Catholic Church is believed to come through the Apostles in what they received from Jesus' life and teaching. The word "tradition," however, indicates various ideological, ritual, and disciplinary customs and practices that were born in the local churches over time (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No:83). The traditions (customs and practices) already adapted to different places and times, can be retained, modified, or even abandoned in the light of Apostolic Tradition under the direction of the Church's authority. There are various traditions in the Church. We have two such traditions for a brief overview: priestly celibacy and male priesthood.

#### Priestly Celibacy

The Catholic Church mandates celibacy for the priesthood, as a life of total dedication to the service of God and people. The social character of celibacy in the priesthood seems to imply that no individual becomes a priest for his selfish needs. A priest in the Catholic Church is seen to exist in order to serve God and the people. The Vatican II decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests states that the priests, by their celibacy, are consecrated to Christ in a new and distinguished way in order to devote themselves fully to the service of God and people (No:16).

During the first few centuries of Catholicism, bishops and priests were selected from among married adult males. But careful historical research on the matter (Cochini,1990) indicates that there were customs and norms requiring continence after episcopal or even sacerdotal ordination of the married man. The Council of Elvira in Spain around the year 302 codified and legalized the prohibition against married priests cohabiting with their wives (Cochini,1990). But they were simply legalizing a practice that had been the norm long before the council. This council marked the official divergence in the practice of Eastern and Western Christianity (Hardon,1981). In the Eastern Church, bishops are chosen from among celibates; married men can be ordained as deacons and priests. In the Western Church, especially from the eleventh century, mandatory celibacy became a norm for the bishops, priests, and deacons. However, the Second Vatican Council established the permanent diaconate and allowed married men to become deacons. These men are not allowed to later become priests. They are authorized to function in Catholic dioceses and parishes by assisting the bishops and priests. Table 34 shows the responses to the practice of priestly celibacy.

The results of a Time/CNN National poll showed that 70% of the Catholics favored retaining priestly celibacy as opposed to 24% who said that priests should be allowed to marry (Gray, 1995). Survey results indicate the opposite trend: the majority seem to disagree with the teaching that priestly celibacy should be retained. More females than males across all ages seem to favor that priests should be allowed

TABLE 34  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Priestly Celibacy Should Be Retained

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	47.4	44.6
% disagree	52.6	55.4
35-54		
% agree	42.1	25.8
% disagree	57.9	74.2
55+		
% agree	36.3	35.6
% disagree	63.7	64.4

to marry. Among the females, disagreement to the Church's teaching is the highest among those who belong to 35-54 age group. Among the males, agreement to retain priestly celibacy is the highest among those who belong to 18-34 age group. One might have expected that those of the pre-Vatican generation, that is supposed to have the vestiges of the old school, would support the Church's position to retain the priestly celibacy. Survey results show that such expectations were wrong. About two out of three respondents favor allowing priests to marry. My conversation with the persons of this age group indicated that some of them think that permission for priests to marry would solve many problems related to the priesthood. Respondents suggested that if priests could marry, then there would be an increase in candidacy to

the priesthood, an increase of services by priests from the family perspective, and a decrease of priestly scandals in the media. No researched data supports the belief that a mere "permission to marry" would solve problems related to the priesthood. Complexity of the subject indicates a separate research topic in the Catholic Church.

Why would more women than men favor allowing priests to get married? No one in my interviews responded to this question directly. Three women showed some animosity toward polarization; for example, "a celibate priest is not one of us." They tended to speculate that a married priest with his spouse would be better able to understand their day-to-day problems. One of the women with a sense of humor said, "celibate priests are a 'good pool' to draw fine persons for marriage."

The younger generation as opposed to the older age groups favors retaining the priestly celibacy. The underlying reasons for favoring priestly celibacy was not clearly stated in my interviews. However, I inferred from their attitudes towards this traditional practice of the Church that they admire it and they want to preserve it. I assume that several of this younger age group struggle between remaining chaste and succumbing to the cultural forces. In their struggle, celibate priests might appear as models in their life.

### Male Priesthood

In the Catholic Church, only men are admitted to priesthood, a rule believed to have its roots in the very practice of Jesus and his Apostles from the beginning of

Christianity. Pope John Paul II, in one of his Apostolic letters, "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis" (1994), states that,

the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord's way of acting in choosing the 12 men whom he made the foundation of his Church. . . . The Apostles did the same when they chose fellow workers who would succeed them in their ministry. (No:2)

The Pope supported his teaching also from the fact that Christ did not entrust his mission to women, including His own mother.

The fact that she received neither the mission proper to the apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the nonadmission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. (No:3)

Besides the above traditional practice, the Church insists on the ideological significance of male priesthood. According to the teaching of the Church, Christ himself is identified in the Sacramental service of the priest. It is known in the Catholic Church by the Latin phrase "in persona Christi." Literally translated, it means that the priest acts in the person of Christ; the priest represents Him physically as well as spiritually when he performs the sacramental services.

For the above reasons, the Pope stated in his Apostolic letter that the "Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful"(No:4). Table 35 presents the responses to the traditional practice of male priesthood.

TABLE 35  
Responses to the Teaching That  
Only Males May Be Ordained as Priests

Age Group	Male	Female
18-34		
% agree	45.3	39.3
% disagree	54.7	60.7
35-54		
% agree	47.2	35.5
% disagree	52.8	64.5
55+		
% agree	51.5	52.7
% disagree	48.5	47.3

National surveys indicate a majority support for the ordination of women to the priesthood. A survey conducted in 1995 showed that 60% of the American Catholics favored women's ordination (Gray, 1995). Two years later, the response of the people remained about the same: when asked to express their opinions to the statement that "women cannot be ordained into the priesthood," 58% disagreed and 34% agreed (Lawler, 1997).

In my survey, I find that there is a tendency for adherence to the traditional practice of male priesthood to be stronger in the older age groups. More females than males have expressed their disagreement to the teaching that only males may be

ordained as priests. However, the variation in “disagreement” among males and females is not large enough to be considered very significant.

Nearly half of the survey population in the age group of 55+ agree that only males may be ordained as priests. Their attachment to the traditional practice of the Church, and a kind of mystical admiration for male priesthood were expressed as reasons for their agreement in our conversations. Among the females, those who disagree with the teaching of the Church seem to view it from the point of women’s right over priestly ordination. It seems to be a reflection of the cultural environment, where women seek equal opportunity and justice in all choices. About five women who belonged to 35-54 age group said, “Women are as capable as men. We expect the Church more than any other governmental organizations to recognize it. It does not make sense to us when the Church says that women cannot be ordained into the priesthood.” The controversy over the issue of ordination of women to the priesthood is continuing.

I now summarize the results found in this chapter. I have discussed respondents’ Catholicism in terms of three subsystems which anthropologists have found to be components of all religious system: ideological or theological beliefs, ritual practices, and religious specialists. In this chapter, I have analyzed the Catholic beliefs on the core, ethical, and traditional matters. My findings are in most areas consonant with the findings of studies done on national samples. Consonance with Church teaching seems to be highest in purely theological matters that have little

direct relevance for the daily life or moral decisions of the believer: belief in the Virgin Birth, the Real Presence in the Eucharist, and others. My sample indicates high adherence to official Church teaching on such matters. But when it comes to ethical or regulatory teachings which conflict with prevailing mainstream cultural norms, large percentages of our respondents tend to take their moral cues and derive their moral principles from the mainstream culture surrounding them. There is deviation on the part of the respondents from the Church teaching on some matters, such as contraception, premarital sex, annulment and remarriage, priestly celibacy, and ordination of women.

My purpose is to examine the influence of the lay specialists on respondents' beliefs because of the interactions that take place among them. I turn to the second major subsystem found in all religious systems, that of ritual practices and ceremonies.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE CATHOLIC PRACTICES

In Chapter 3 I discussed the major life problems reported by the survey population. I used two categories of frequency: 1) occurrence and 2) engagement in personal prayer. Problems related to intra and interpersonal relationships and health seem to be the real concern of the population. In this chapter, I discuss whether religious practices and beliefs have any link to their life problems. In my interviews, I noted that people attribute causal agents for each and everything that happens in their day-to-day life. These causal agents include not only the self, fellow humans, and good or bad luck, but also their religious beliefs and practices. For example, those who believe in God's love are inclined to explain everything in benevolent ways: "It is God's Will." On the contrary, those who view God as an angry person are inclined to interpret every event as punishment for infractions: "I did not go for Mass for the past two months." Their religious practices, for the most part, are associated with their religious beliefs. Proponents of attribution theories such as Kelley (1971) and Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick (1985) suggested that people make attributions in order to make sense of their experiences and to understand the causes of problems they encounter in life. Newman and Pargament (1990), stated that

The religious beliefs and aspirations of the individual would seem to play a potentially key role in choosing the solution to a problem. For example, the teachings of Christ may serve as a model for decision-making in the face of critical life decisions. (p.391)

### Catholic Ritual Practices: A Brief Overview

The survey questionnaire has a list of Catholic practices and beliefs. In this chapter, I focus on the practices—the rituals in which Catholics engage. In discussing Catholicism, a distinction must be made between three major classes of rituals: 1) the Mass, 2) the Sacraments, and 3) sacramentals and other devotions. I discuss each of these briefly.

The Mass is the most important and most visible act of public worship of the Church. This ritual is recognized as the center of all Catholic religious life. Originally it was known as the Eucharist, a Greek word which means to give thanks. The word “Mass” itself seems to have derived from the two dismissals of the ritual: first, the ritual of dismissal of catechumens (adults preparing themselves for conversion) after the Scripture readings and sermon and, second, the dismissal of the faithful after the Eucharistic service. These rituals came to be known as the “ceremony of dismissals.” Before Vatican II, when the Mass was still celebrated in Latin, the priest concluded the Mass with the Latin words: “Ite missa est.” The literal translation of this is “Go, the dismissal is made.” However, the English translation of the Mass says, “The Mass is ended, let us go . . . in the Peace of Christ.” What was commonly known as the

ritual of dismissals in the early church is known now popularly as the Mass. It is also known by several other names such as "The Lord's Supper," "The Breaking of Bread," "The Holy Sacrifice," and "The Holy and Divine Liturgy." All these names signify the central meaning that is universally accepted in the Catholic Church, that the mystery of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ is ritually celebrated in the Mass, and the faithful are sent forth to give witness to God's love and fulfill God's will in their lives.

In terms of its internal structure, the Mass is divided into four major sections: a) the Gathering, b) the Liturgy of the Word, c) the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and d) the Dismissal. Each section contains a few elements. The "gathering" rite includes the initial greeting by the priest, penitential rite, the Gloria, and the opening prayer. The liturgy of the Word involves two or three readings from the Bible, sermon, creed, and general intercessions. The liturgy of the Eucharist comprises the preparation of the gifts, the Eucharistic prayer, and the Communion. The dismissal, which is also known as "commissioning," incorporates a concluding prayer, a blessing, and dismissal of the assembly. Though the Mass is structured in four sections with several elements, they all constitute one single act of worship. The Mass, the central ritual of Catholicism, requires the presence of a priest. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) says, "Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord" (p. 355). Since Vatican II, lay involvement in the Mass has increased. There is more

interaction between priest and public at the Mass. Laity are now called on to do some of the scripture readings and to distribute Communion (tasks formerly reserved to the priest). Nonetheless, the central act of the Eucharistic prayer--the consecration and transformation of the bread and wine--can still be done only by a priest.

Priests celebrate the Mass every day of the week. Sunday Mass is obligatory for all Catholics:

Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church. (Canon Law, 1246:1)

There are also several other days such as Christmas, Epiphany, the Ascension, the Immaculate Conception, and the Feast of All Saints in which the obligation of attending Mass is binding.

Mass is the central ritual of the Church; there are seven other Catholic rituals referred to as the Sacraments. The Mass is, technically speaking, not a Sacrament. It contains a Sacrament--the receiving of the Eucharist or Communion--but has traditionally been called the Eucharistic Sacrifice rather than Sacrament. The seven Sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist (Communion), Confession, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. I discuss Confession and Communion later; at this point I will describe the other five Sacraments.

Baptism, known as the Sacrament of regeneration, brings a spiritual rebirth to the baptized. It is rooted in the belief that Jesus died for the sins of the world, that He

was buried, and that He was raised (1 Corinth. 15, 3-4). The ritual of Baptism is the spiritual reenactment of the three categories: separation, transition, and incorporation (Van Gennep, 1964). The baptized becomes a member of God's people, worthy of receiving the other Sacraments in the Catholic Church. The specialist of Baptism is normally an ordained priest or deacon, but in case of an emergency, the Church allows anyone to baptize.

Confirmation as a Sacrament is believed to deepen a person's divine affiliation with God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Such an affiliation invites the confirmed to bear witness to his or her faith through words and deeds. The ordinary specialist who performs the ritual of Confirmation is the bishop. However, if a Christian is in danger of death, any priest is allowed to perform the ritual. A priest can also confirm the catechumens who are prepared through RCIA and given the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Communion during the Easter Vigil.

Anointing of the Sick is administered to those who may be sick or dying. Traditionally this Sacrament is known as "The Last Rite," because it was given only to those at the point of death. Now it is administered to those for whom danger of death is not necessarily imminent, to give the sick person strength and spiritual health, including the remission of sins. Hence, the ordinary specialists who can perform the ritual of anointing the sick are the bishop and the priest who are endowed with the power to forgive sins.

Marriage is considered a Sacrament in which the couple, of their own free will, give themselves to each other mutually and definitively after the example of Christ who gave up his life for the Church. Marriage in the Catholic Church is celebrated as a sacred contract, which is binding because God has established marriage as the natural means of procreating and upbringing children (Canon Law: 1055:1). The essence of the sacred contract consists in the mutual consent of the partners. Therefore, unlike the other Sacraments, this Sacrament is conferred by the contracting partners on one another. A priest or a deacon acts as an official minister of the Church to assist the partners in the ritual of marriage.

Holy Orders is the Sacrament of apostolic ministry. Those who receive this Sacrament are commissioned to continue the work of Jesus on earth with the powers granted through the rituals. The essential elements of the ritual consist of the placing on hands and the prayer of consecration. There are three levels of clergy who have received Holy Orders: episcopate (bishop), presbyterate (priest), and diaconate (deacon). The specialist of this Sacrament is a validly consecrated bishop.

Three of the seven Sacraments are received only once in the life of the Catholic: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. Two Sacraments, in principle, are intended to be frequented by Catholics: Communion and Confession. The frequency of access to these two Sacraments, in addition to frequency of attendance at Mass, are useful operational barometers of the intensity of the religious life of a Catholic. I have

used them thus in the survey, as will be seen below. I now discuss the structure and logic of these two Sacraments.

Confession is a ritual in which individual Catholics tell a priest the sins which they have committed since their last Confession. Traditionally, Confessions used to be heard anonymously in the confessionals. Priests could not see the penitent. Now people have the option either to use traditional confessionals or to sit face-to-face with the priest and confess. One might think that the younger generation would choose the "face-to-face" and the older generation the traditional confessionals. But, one-on-one interviews show that choosing the mode of Confession is not a question of generational difference. Several older people preferred to go and sit face-to-face, confess their guilt, and seek forgiveness. Several young people, especially students, seem to prefer the confessional that protects their anonymity. It is the Catholic teaching that the Sacrament of Confession brings God's forgiveness upon the individual for his or her sins. The term "Confession" is said to imply an essential element of this Sacrament, namely the disclosure of sins to God through a priest. Since Vatican II, Confession is known by several other names: a) the Sacrament of Conversion, that seems to convey the presence of Jesus' call to conversion and a return to God, b) the Sacrament of Penance, that seems to express penitent's personal role in the process of conversion, penance, and satisfaction, c) the Sacrament of Forgiveness, that seems to imply the pardon and peace given to the penitent by the priest's absolution, and d) the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that signifies the

encounter between God and the penitent through the ritual action of this Sacrament. The usual ritual acts of this Sacrament are the priest greets the penitent, the priest reads a passage of scripture, the penitent confesses his or her sins, the priest gives advice and penance, the penitent expresses his or her sorrow, and the priest gives absolution. This ritual is traditionally known as individual Confession. There also two other forms of Confession in the practice of the Catholic Church, used only on special occasions: 1) a common celebration of penance followed by individual Confession and absolution and 2) a common celebration of penance followed by common absolution. The former is used frequently in the parishes in special seasons such as Advent and Lent, while the latter requires permission from the diocesan bishop. The bishop considers whether there is grave necessity for common absolution (Canon Law: 961). Since Vatican II, a new emphasis is placed on this communal mode of Confession. In the words of Vatican II,

those who approach the sacrament of penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for all the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No:11,2)

Under this communal dimension, sin is considered as an offense not only against God but also against fellow human beings. The Sacrament of Confession brings reconciliation with God and the Church. The faithful are encouraged to go to Confession as many times as needed even when grave sins are not in question.



Frequent Confessions are recommended as a source of spiritual strength to fight against frailty and weakness of human nature. However, the Church requires an annual Confession in the "Easter duty" (Canon Law, 920).

Communion in the Catholic Church is a "sacred banquet" of the Mass.

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of Communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through Communion. To receive Communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No: 1382)

Receiving Communion in the Mass is recommended as a more perfect form of participation in the Mass. It is the traditional belief that when the faithful receive Communion, they share in the benefits of the sacrifice, renew the New Covenant that God had made in Christ, and foreshadow or anticipate in faith and hope the eternal banquet (Heaven) in the life to come. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1994, brought out the union that is signified among the faithful by the reception of Communion. "Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body--the Church" (No: 1396). The Church believes that the unity that is signified already by Baptism among the faithful is further strengthened by Communion.

In practice, the faithful are expected to have good dispositions in order to receive Communion. "Good disposition" is traditionally meant to be the absence of

grave sin. Anyone who is conscious of grave sin could not receive Communion without first having received forgiveness in the Sacrament of Confession. However, if a person with grave sin had no opportunity to receive forgiveness because there was no priest, that person could receive Communion with an act of perfect contrition for sin and a resolution to go to Confession as soon as possible (Canon Law: 916). The Catholic Church encourages the faithful to receive Communion as often as daily. The faithful have "Easter Duty," the obligation to go to Confession and receive Communion once a year, preferably during the Easter season. The preceding three rituals--the Mass, Confession, and Communion--are the distinguishing features of Catholic practice. Catholics also have traditional practices which are known as "sacramentals." I next discuss what distinguishes sacramentals from the Sacraments.

Sacramentals can be defined as religious actions or objects used in the Church for the promotion of devotion or spiritual nature among the faithful. Unlike the Sacraments which are believed to be instituted by Christ, sacramentals are instituted by the Church in order to assist the faithful to receive the fruit of the Sacraments and to sanctify different circumstances of life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No: 1677). For example, the practices of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, or Stations of the Cross, or Rosary are expected to increase people's participation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Pilgrimages and processions are expected to increase appreciation for the Sacrament of Penance. However, the Catholic Church insists that there is one vital difference between the Sacraments and the sacramentals. The

Sacraments confer grace on the one who receives by virtue of their administration. This is known in the Catholic Church by the Latin phrase "Ex Opere Operanto." The Sacraments have an infallible assurance of grace for the participants from God, whereas sacramentals for their efficacy of grace depend on the sanctity or the pious dispositions of the participants. This is known in Latin as "ex Opere Operantis." For a good many Catholics, piety is associated with sacramentals. I discuss briefly sacramentals found in the survey parishes.

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is an ancient practice in the Catholic Church. The ritual of this practice was first recorded at Hildesheim, Germany, in the fifteenth century (Deedy, 1990). Its roots lie in the belief of the faithful in the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated host. According to this belief, the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated host is not only when the faithful receive Communion in the Mass, but also in the reservation of the consecrated host in the tabernacle or on the altar for public adoration. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) says,

The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the Sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession. (No:1378)

Rosary is a religious practice that goes back at least 400 years in the Catholic Church. A legend says that Saint Dominic (1170-1221) received the Rosary from Mary. Development of the devotion lasted possibly from 1100 to 1569, when Pope

Pius V is said to have approved the practice (Deedy, 1990). Rosary consists in repeating the Hail Mary 150 times (counted by beads), while meditating on the 15 mysteries (events) from the Gospels. Each mystery known as a "decade" (10 beads) is preceded by the Lord's prayer (Our Father) and concludes with "Glory be to the Father. . . ." The religious practice of Rosary has declined since the 1960s in the United States. Some attribute the cause to the teachings of Vatican II, saying that the Council relegated Mary to the concluding chapter on the dogmatic constitution of the Church and thus reduced the importance of Marian devotions such as Rosary.

Novena is one of the popular Catholic practices. The term "Novena" comes from the Latin word "Novem," which means a period of nine that could be nine days or weeks or months in prayer. In the Middle Ages, kings and princes are reported to have provided in their wills for a Novena of Masses after their deaths. In Spain and France, Novenas originated in connection with the celebration of Christmas. People observed nine days of prayer before Christmas, representing the nine months that Jesus was in Mary's womb (Deedy, 1990). Novena practice can be either private or public. The general purpose of novenas is to obtain favors such as good health, success from God directly, or through the intercession of a saint. For example, when I started to write this dissertation, a friend of mine recommended that I make a novena to St. Joseph of Cupertino, the patron saint of those writing their dissertations.

Stations of the Cross is a Catholic practice that grew out of Catholic pilgrimages. Pilgrimages were considered as a way to purify the pilgrims, who could obtain

blessings from God. The Holy Land was one of the primary places for pilgrimages because people wanted to walk in the footsteps of Christ. When circumstances made it difficult to go to the Holy Land, the Stations of the Cross came into use as a substitute, representing the events along the road to Calvary in the Holy Land. The number of Stations evolved as the practice of the Stations continued through the centuries. It is reported that, in the seventeenth century, Clement XII codified the devotion as it is known and practiced today (Deedy, 1990). Most Catholic churches have a series of fourteen Stations on the walls that depict the events from the death sentence of Jesus to His burial. Some churches today include a final scene, the Resurrection.

Fasting and Abstinence from meat is one of three recommended forms of penance in the Catholic Church; the other two are prayer and charity. Fasting means entire abstinence from food for the whole or part of the fasting day. The New Testament writings indicate that Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights in the desert and often recommended to His followers why and how they should fast (Mathew 6:16-18). The early church is said to have observed fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays. In the West, the Wednesday fast was shifted to Saturday around the fourth century (Deedy, 1990). The evolutionary course of fasting in the Catholic Church shows that as time passed, the emphasis on fasting became less legalistic and demanding. Perhaps no other changes of the Vatican II had such an effect on the psyche of Catholics as the change of rules regarding fast and abstinence. The whole

emphasis now seems to be on voluntary fasting and on charitable works such as caring for the poor and the lonely. In the United States, the obligation to fast and to abstain from meat holds for Ash Wednesday (that marks the beginning of the season of Lent), and Good Friday (that marks the death of Jesus on the cross). Abstaining from meat holds on the Fridays of Lent.

The fast before Communion is still in practice. However, it has gone through several changes. A complete fast from food and drink, including water, from midnight to the time of the reception of Communion was mandatory by the Middle Ages. This obligation was reduced in 1953 to complete abstinence from solid food. The communicants were allowed to drink water at any time and liquids (except alcohol) up to one hour before Communion. In 1964, this was modified to complete abstinence from everything except water and medicine for only the last hour before Communion (Hardon, 1981).

Grace at meals is one of the traditional practices of Christianity. Invoked at the table before meals, grace is a request for God's blessings to come upon the food and the people who share the food. The blessing usually includes the signing of the Cross and a vocal prayer.

Bible reading and other spiritual reading have become increasingly important to Catholics since Vatican II. Though it is not yet common among Catholics to possess their own individual copies of the Bible, it is a tradition for a Catholic family to possess a family Bible. In order to encourage this "Bible spirituality," parishes are

offering Bible classes to their parishioners. Besides the Bible, the Church recommends the reading of the lives of heroic people (saints) for spiritual nourishment.

Liturgy of the Hours, the daily recitation of the official prayer of the Church, formally known as the "Divine Office," is considered as a sacred duty of those who have entered into religious life. However, after Vatican II, the Church recommended the Liturgy of the Hours to all the faithful. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) states that, "The Liturgy of the Hours is intended to become the prayer of the whole People of God. . . . His members participate according to their own place in the Church" (p.304). The structure of the Liturgy of the Hours consists of morning and evening prayer, Matins--a prayer to be said at any time of the day, the Office of Readings taken from the Scriptures and writings of the Church Fathers, Terce, Sext and None--any one of them to be used at an appropriate time of the day--usually midmorning, noon or mid-afternoon, and compline, which is the last prayer of the day. It is not a common practice yet among the laity.

Spiritual retreat is a concentrated period of time spent in prayer and reflection. The duration of time varies: the conventional retreats last from three to thirty days in retreat centers or monasteries; at the parish level, retreats may be one day or even less set aside for spiritual purposes. There are directed retreat and non-directed retreats. The directed retreat is conducted under the supervision and guidance of a leader such

as a priest, a religious person, or a qualified lay person. Non-directed retreats consist of individuals spending periods in solitude and prayer.

Charismatic prayer meetings are part of a devotional movement within the Catholic Church that fosters direct experience of God through the Holy Spirit. Charismatic prayer movement in the United States has been popular from the early 1970s. The structure of typical charismatic prayer meetings includes spontaneous vocal prayers, praying in tongues, singing, constant reference to the Bible, prophecies, and personal testimonies. Organizing the meetings is mostly in the hands of the laity. The participation in the meetings is merely voluntary. Even non-parishioners who wish to become a member of the charismatic group are welcomed into the group.

Centering prayer is based on the premise that God speaks to human beings not only through the divinely inspired Scriptures, but also through the whole creation and especially in the depths of one's own being. The technique of centering prayer is aimed at enabling the person to listen to God and respond in quietness. Centering prayer lasts anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour. There is no uniform structure to this practice. However, the essential elements are relaxation and quietness in deep meditation on the love of God as experienced by the individual.

Personal reflection of God is a long tradition in the Catholic Church. Some call this individual reflection an examination of conscience. The purpose of individual reflection is to experience the presence of God in one's life and see where one has responded to God's Spirit and where one has failed. There is no formal structure to



this practice. However, this practice has been fused into other structures of religious practices such as the Mass (personal reflection is called for in the beginning of the Mass, and after each reading from the Scripture) and the penance service (personal reflection over one's state of grace).

### Structure of the Survey Questions

Except for the religious practices related to the seven Sacraments that are common to the Universal Church, religious practices related to devotions differ from parish to parish. In my preliminary interviews with parishioners, I asked them to state all the religious practices they have in their parishes. Under religious practices, I listed 17 items that belong to communal, familial, and personal dimensions. The objective was to measure individual participation in these practices by frequency questions such as "once a year," "several times a year," "once a month," "several times a month," "once a week," "several times a week," "daily," and "did not do it in the last 12 months." For analytic purposes, I collapsed and dichotomized the responses according to the frequency with which the rituals were reported. For example, in analyzing Mass attendance, which is frequent in the survey population, I distinguished those who went at least once a week from those who went less frequently. In the matter of Confession, however, which has become much less frequent, to achieve a reasonable spread between the two categories, I distinguished between those who went at least once a year and those who went less frequently. The use of these breakdowns will become clearer in the analysis.

### Religious Practices: Analysis

The list of Catholic practices encompasses a range of items: Mass, Communion, Confession, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Novena, fasting, abstaining from meat, Grace at meals, private Bible reading, other spiritual reading, Liturgy of the Hours, spiritual retreat, charismatic prayer meetings, centering prayer, and personal reflection of God. Some of these practices are communal, others are familial and personal in nature. Some of these items would fall under more than one cluster; I indicate these in Table 36 with a check (X) in their appropriate categories.

For the purpose of analysis, I grouped these practices under three categories: 1) the core Catholic practices, 2) the Catholic Sacramental practices, which are generally performed only by Catholics, and 3) the general Christian practices, which are done by Protestants as well as Catholics. The analysis of the core Catholic practices consists of Mass, Communion, and Confession. Under Catholic Sacramental practices, I analyzed the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Novena, fast and abstinence, Liturgy of the Hours, and spiritual retreat. The analysis of the general Christian practices include Grace at meals, private Bible reading, other spiritual reading, charismatic prayer meetings, centering prayer, and personal reflection of God.

TABLE 36  
Distribution of Religious Practices in Three Categories

	Communal	Familial	Personal
Mass	X		
Communion	X		X
Confession			X
Benediction of the Blessed Sac.	X		
Rosary	X	X	X
Stations of the Cross	X		X
Novena	X	X	X
Fasting			X
Abstinence from meat			X
Grace at meals		X	X
Private Bible reading			X
Other spiritual reading		X	X
Liturgy of the Hours	X		X
Spiritual retreat	X		X
Charismatic prayer meetings	X		X
Centering prayer	X		X
Personal reflection of God			X

### Core Catholic Practices

The majority of Catholics used to attend Mass every Sunday and other days of obligation, but Mass attendance among American Catholics has declined since 1958. Mass attendance was 74% in 1958; in 1985, however, only 53% attended Mass. In comparison, church attendance among Protestants fell less than 10%, from 44% to 39% in 1985 (Gallup & Castelli, 1987). A recent poll conducted by the Roper Center

for Public Opinion Research indicates that the weekly Mass attendance, at present, among Catholics is 47% (Lawler, 1997).

Despite the large sample of nearly 1,300 Catholics, the data base does not permit precise comparison between respondents and these national statistics for Catholics. National surveys are generally done by random sampling and telephone interviews. My survey was administered only to Catholics who had attended Mass on one weekend in each of the four parishes. Therefore, I expected the survey to show a much higher rate of Mass attendance among this group than among the Catholic population at large. Table 37 presents the reported frequency of Mass attendance, Communion, and Confession among respondents by age groups.

Table 37 indicates that the high reported percentage of weekly Mass attendance is substantially higher than the 47% reported nationally. This is probably a reflection

TABLE 37  
Distribution of Mass, Communion, and Confession,  
by Age Group

Age Group	Weekly Mass	Weekly Communion	Yearly Confession
18-34	75.6%	69.6%	50.6%
35-54	84.1%	77.1%	48.4%
55+	91.8%	87.2%	59.7%
All ages combined	83.9%	78.0%	52.4%
Separate chi-squares for all three rituals indicate $P < 0.001$			

of the nature of the sample. But internal breakdowns of the data by age group permits detection of the same trends of declining attendance that are found nationally. In the survey population, the lowest Mass attendance is among those who are 34 and under. When I compared this finding with the national survey, my results looked high. According to Hegy (1993), Mass attendance for this age group reached its lowest point in the 1990s at 13.2%.

Is the discrepancy between Mass attendance by those under 35 in the sample population and the national survey purely a function of the difference in sampling procedures? Perhaps not. A large percentage of 18-34 year olds are college students. Churches offer the students in this community more opportunities for religious involvement than is true for the national population at large. Each religious denomination (Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Moslem) has a student center that offers services to the students. The kind of services they offer, such as spirituality, education and entertainment, seem to attract this age group to religious attendance. The pastor of St. Benedict Catholic Church and Student Center indicated that during a given weekend, about seven thousand students attend Sunday Masses in his parish. There are 17 Masses celebrated in the community on every weekend, which gives ample opportunity for students and others to attend Mass. It is quite possible that the higher level of Mass attendance, which I found among the 18-35s in the sample, could reflect higher overall attendance than is true nationally.

Our Table 37 indicates that there is a statistically significant increase in weekly Mass attendance by age group. There are two quite different interpretations of this. It could simply be a "life-cycle" phenomenon: as people get older, their religious observance increases. Under this life cycle model, as people assume responsibilities such as raising children and family, they tend to incorporate spirituality into their lives. Or in this same life-cycle framework, seeking spirituality could be part of the religious quest of Baby Boomers in their search for meaning and purpose in life that they had not found through focusing on career, materialism, and other exploits (Barna, 1996). People absent themselves from church attendance when they are in adolescence and return later as they mature.

A different interpretation points to an unidirectional trend toward overall reduced church attendance. In support of the life-cycle model, my own one-on-one interviewing with a group of Catholics indicated that older people will frequently admit that, when they were younger, they were lax in their observance. On the other hand, the diachronic data available from national statistics show a decline among all age groups over time in Mass attendance. The sample data on Mass attendance, then, are best analyzed as the product of the combined operation of life-cycle patterns and overall diachronic declines in church attendance.

Almost identical age-specific trends can be seen in the data on frequency of reception of Holy Communion, also presented in Table 37. Like the Mass attendance, reception of Communion increases with age. An increase from 77% among those of

the 35-54 age group to 87% among those of the 55 and older group might suggest that as people grow older, they are inclined to grow in faith to see Communion as the pledge of eternal life. From this perspective, their faith motivates them to receive Communion more often. My observation among the sick in the hospital was that the majority of those who requested Confession and Communion belonged to the older age group. The younger generation is satisfied with a blessing and, in some cases, with some pastoral counseling.

A brief comment on the closeness between the percentages for weekly Mass and weekly Communion is necessary. In the pre-Vatican II Church, weekly Mass attendance seemed high in comparison to weekly Communion. I have no data on the matter, but my interviews with older people suggest that as many as half of those attending Mass refrained from Communion for various reasons. One reason was the strict requirement for the Eucharistic fast: one could not receive Communion if one had eaten food or had drunk any liquid (including water) after the preceding midnight. However, the major traditional barrier to frequent Communion seemed to be a sense of individual sins. The midnight fast has been replaced by a less strict Eucharistic fast: one needs to fast only one hour before receiving Communion. And the decline in yearly Confession, as I will discuss later, indicates the trend in disbelief in personal sinfulness.

In my interviews, I heard about a current practice that makes some people somewhat embarrassed not to receive Communion. It was the usual Catholic practice

to receive Communion at whatever point of the Communion time one chose to go. There was anonymity. Now in most parishes, ushers begin at the front of the church and make people come out row by row for Communion. Great social pressure seems to be put on some to receive Communion simply as a vehicle for avoiding comments from the people seated behind.

Whereas the data on Communion practices show an increase in frequency of reception (when one is participating in the Mass), the national data and the survey data from this study on the practice of Confession show just the opposite trend. National studies indicate that the practice of Confession is declining in the United States. The Roper survey (1997) found that only 10% go to Confession at least once a month and 33% go less than once a year. The survey also indicated that about 10% said that they have never been to Confession.

As can be seen above in Table 37, a stronger pattern of decline in the use of Confession can be seen among the respondents. Nearly half of our respondents reported going to Confession less than once a year, as opposed to the 33% national figures. Even among these more devout subsets of Catholics, use of Confession seems substantially lower than the national average.

The conventional wisdom about the greater laxity of younger people in the practice of Confession seems to be extended to the middle age group. About 52% of the middle aged attend Confession less than once a year. Those who are 55 and above



are more likely to fulfill their Easter duty (at least once a year) than the other two age groups.

This low practice of Confession cannot be attributed to the unavailability of the Sacrament in our survey population. While most of the people go for Confession less often than it is recommended by the Church (at least once a year), the Sacrament of Confession is available in all four sample parishes. Three out of four parishes have Confessions on Saturday evenings, and one parish has it from Monday to Friday in the evenings. All four parishes have common celebration of penance several times during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Confessions are also available by personal appointment with the priests of their parishes.

With Confession readily available in the parishes, the question is why do people go so rarely. The decline in the frequency of Confession is attributed to several causes. In my preliminary interviews, I heard one compelling reason. Several people said that they experience reconciliation with God during Mass itself, bypassing the confessional. The Mass has many expressions of forgiveness for those who participate in it. For example, in the beginning of the Mass, there is a penitential rite that calls for a pause to recall to mind one's sins and ask for God's forgiveness. At the end of the pause and prayers, the priest says "May Almighty God have mercy on us and forgive us our sins and lead us into everlasting life." The Lord's Prayer is prayed by all participants in the Mass. This prayer asks God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." These and other references to the forgiveness

of sins in the Mass satisfy some Catholics who find reconciliation outside the Sacrament of Confession. Some people said that they experience God's reconciliation in other devotional practices such as personal prayer and reading the Bible. However, the Church teaches that the Sacrament of Confession requires the intervention of a priest if the person confessing is to receive God's forgiveness for personal sins.

The gender bias in Mass attendance was not remarkable. A more or less equal percentage (84%) of males and females reported Mass attendance at least once a week. Usually women report more church attendance than men, which, is attributed to the roles of women in family formation: marriage and child-raising. Women are said to be more involved in the formation of their children's religious orientation from childhood. However, does the equal reporting of Mass attendance by female and male in the survey population suggest that males are equally as interested as females in family formation? My interviews with people showed that males are equally as interested as females in family formation. Several men indicated that they would go to Mass every Sunday in order to set a good example for their young children.

The practice of Communion by gender was not statistically significant ( $P > .01$ ). The difference between the gender in this practice was less than 5%. Among the females, 80% receive Communion at least once a week, whereas among the males, it is 75.29%. The analysis indicates that not all males and females who come for the Mass at least once a week receive Communion. The difference however, is greater among males than females. This is to say, of the 83.66% males who attend the Mass,

75.29% indicated receiving Communion, whereas of the 84.31% females who attend the Mass, 80% reported receiving Communion. The data in this study show that the females were more inclined to receive Communion than the males.

### Catholic Sacramental Practices

**Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament:** In the sample parishes, two parishes have the First Friday devotion in which the consecrated host is exposed to the faithful on the altar for adoration and prayers. The service concludes with a Benediction (blessing). One parish has the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Tuesdays after the Novena of the Miraculous Medal. Given the available opportunities for this religious practice in the community, those 55 and above are more likely to take advantage of the opportunity than the younger age groups. Table 38 presents the frequency of the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament by age group.

TABLE 38  
Frequency of the Religious Practice of Benediction

Age Group	Less than 1 year	At least 1 year	Total
18-34 (%)	245 70.61	102 29.39	347
35-54 (%)	308 63.11	180 36.89	488
55+ (%)	163 46.84	185 53.16	348
Total	716	467	1182
Chi-Square 43.00, $P < 0.001$			

Among those 18-34 years, only 29% had been to the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year. My preliminary interviews revealed that some of the young people did not know the meaning of this religious practice. They showed a lack of Catholic vocabulary, in general.

Rosary: The survey showed statistical significance in the frequency of reciting Rosary among the age groups. It seems there is an increase in this traditional Catholic-based practice as one increases in age. Table 39 presents the frequency of Rosary.

As Table 39 indicates, the frequency difference in praying the Rosary between those 55 and above and those 18-34 is more than 50%. In my informal conversation

TABLE 39  
Frequency of the Religious Practice of Rosary

Age Group	Less than 1 month	At least 1 month	Total
18-34 (%)	294 80.77	70 19.23	364
35-54 (%)	366 72.48	139 27.52	365
55+ (%)	209 57.26	156 42.74	365
Total	869	365	1,234
Chi-Square 50.00, $P < 0.001$			

with a group of five Catholic students, I asked them if they owned the Rosary. One of them said, "I don't have a Rosary, and I don't know how to say the Rosary." Another student said, "My grandparents say the Rosary for me, so I don't have to say it." Another student said, "Rosary is for those who are retired from their jobs and have plenty of time." In the sample, all four parishes have the practice of praying the Rosary before the daily Mass. The attendance for the daily Rosary in each parish ranges from 3 to 15 persons, depending on the liturgical seasons. For example, during the season of Lent more people participate in praying the Rosary as part of their spiritual renewal in the season.

**Novena:** Only one parish holds a Novena on Tuesdays in honor of the Miraculous Medal. The younger as well as the older generations seem to make private novenas according to their needs. Table 40 presents the frequency of novena by age groups.

Our survey indicates that the percentage of those making novena among the 18-34 age group is higher than those of the 34-54. This difference could be an indication that students make more novenas for various reasons including their success in the final exams. I observed during my pastoral field work that the students make more frequent church visits during exam periods than any other time.

**Fasting:** The survey results indicate that the practice of fasting once a year is strong across the age groups. Of those who reported fasting once a year, 59.56% belong to 18-34; 65.01% belong to 35-54 and 66.11% belong to 55+. There is a

TABLE 40  
Frequency of Religious Practice of Novena, by Age Groups

Age Group	Less than 1 year	At least 1 year	Total
18-34 (%)	279 78.81	75 21.19	354
35-5 (%)	401 80.85	95 19.15	495
55+ (%)	253 70.87	104 29.13	357
Total	933	274	1,207
Chi-Square 12.00, $P < 0.01$			

correlation between the increase in age and practice of fasting. As people grow older, fasting appears to be seen as a source of grace to receive benefits from God. My assumption is that most of the older people follow the Lenten observance of fast much more often than that is recommended by the Church.

Abstaining from meat: There was no statistical significance in the practice of abstinence from meat. Of those who indicated this practice at least once a year, each age group was represented by about 80%. In an age of health-culture where diet and exercise seems to be the practice of the day, it is difficult to determine how many of them abstain from meat for religious reasons.

Liturgy of the Hours and Stations of the Cross: The survey responses related to the Liturgy of the Hours indicated that this practice is not common. Liturgy of the Hours is still considered the obligatory practice of the clergy. Stations of the Cross is practiced more during the season of Lent than any other time.

Retreat: It seems to be a more common practice than the Liturgy of the Hours. There is some statistical significance among the age groups on retreats. Table 41 presents the distribution.

Contrary to the conventional expectation, the practice of retreat among the younger generation was higher than the older generation. One explanation is that two parishes have developed ministries that are focused on the younger age group. For

TABLE 41  
Distribution of the Practice of Retreat, by Age Group

Age Group	Less than 1 year	At least 1 year	Total
18-34 (%)	269 73.90	95 26.10	364
35-54 (%)	399 80.12	99 19.88	498
55+ (%)	275 77.90	78 22.10	353
Total	943	272	1,215
Chi-Square 50.00, $P < 0.01$			

example, the Alpha Retreat conducted two times a year in St. Benedict attracts more than 75 students. Private retreats guided by clergy and lay specialists are also common in the parishes. A lay specialist in spiritual direction from St. Benedict parish reported that annually 80 to 100 people from St. Benedict make private guided retreats.

Gender differences in the category of the Catholic sacramental practices are indicated here. Of the eight Catholic sacramental practices, women were more practicing than men. Women scored higher percentages of attendance or participation in five practices; men and women about equal in three practices. The practices on which women scored higher percentages than men are: 1) Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (41.15% / 35.05%), 2) Rosary (32.80% / 25.40%), 3) Novena (27.26% / 16.26%), and 4) Abstinence from meat (85.52% / 79.33%). The two practices in which there is no discernable difference are 1) fasting (63.00% / 64.00%), and (2) Retreat (22.38% / 22.86%).

Women are reported to be the principle practitioners of religion in the world (Batson and Ventis, 1982). The Catholic Church has honored several women as saints (martyrs) who had given up their lives in the practice of their religious faith. Women continue to report frequent religious practices than men. Women seem convinced that it is the spirituality that influences their day-to-day life events such as personal growth, family formation, career success, and social activities.



### General Christian Practices

The percentage of Catholics reading the Bible at least once a month increased from 23% to 32% between 1977 to 1986 (Gallup & Castelli, 1987). A recent poll indicates that some general Christian practices such as Bible reading, Spiritual reading, Retreats, and Centering prayer are becoming common among Catholics. According to The Roper Poll (1997), 30% of the Catholics said that they read the Bible more than once a month, and 50% said they read once a month or less. Among the survey population, the majority of those who read the Bible belong to the 18-34 age group. About 41% of them said that they read the Bible at least once a month. This is about 4% more than the middle age group and 6% more than the older group. This variation could be explained by the fact that the older group was not encouraged to read the Bible by the Church for the fear of possible private interpretation. Only after Vatican II, did the Church promote a spirituality based on the Bible for Catholics. The Church began to encourage Bible services, Bible studies, and a wider cycle of Bible readings in the Mass. Even after these practices were introduced in the parishes, older Catholics still remain dubious about them.

Like Bible reading, the practice of Centering prayer seems more common among the younger group than the other two groups. This is, again, a new phenomenon introduced in the parishes that is welcomed more among the youth. I have no data so as to make a comparison of this practice with the Protestants.

TABLE 42  
Percentages Practicing Bible Reading and Other Spiritual Reading, by Gender

Gender	Practice	Less than 1 month	At least 1 month
Male	Bible Reading	67.26	32.74
Female	Bible Reading	58.89	41.11
Male	Other Spiritual Reading	68.13	31.87
Female	Other Spiritual Reading	53.37	46.63
For each practice: $P < 0.001$			

For the following three general Christian practices, there is a clear pattern: the older the person, the more frequently they practice 1) Grace at meals, 2) personal reflection of God, and 3) other spiritual reading. These three items are traditional Christian practices that are common in homes and individual lives.

The survey results suggest that women are more likely to engage in these general Christian practices than men. There are two practices in which women are substantially different from men. Table 42 presents the distribution of the Bible reading and other spiritual reading by gender.

As we see in Table 42, in Bible reading and other spiritual reading, women have a big lead: About 10% more females than males are reading the Bible at least once a month. About 15% more females than males read other spiritual materials. In my interviews with parishioners, I found that more women than men read bedtime stories to their children. Most women preferred to read stories from the Bible than

from any other book. They indicated that reading stories from the Bible such as miracle stories help not only their children but also themselves. Women also engage in Centering prayer more than men. But the difference was not as significant as in Bible reading and other spiritual reading. Centering prayer is practiced once a year by 43% of the females and 37% of the males. In such practices as "Grace at meals" and "personal reflection," there is no noticeable difference between men and women.

For the purposes of further analysis, I created a new, variable "practice scale." According to the religious practice scale, the lowest score was 4--those who do virtually no religious practices--and the maximum was 96; among the respondents, the mean for this scale was 35.3. Then I collapsed the practice scale into low observance, medium observance, and high observance. Table 43 presents the distribution of three levels of religious observance among our respondents.

There is equal percentage of low and medium observance in the sample population. The percentage of high observance differs only by 2% from the low and

TABLE 43  
The Level of Religious Observance, by Number and Percentage

Practice Scale	Number	Percentage
Low observance	422	32.9
Medium observance	420	32.8
High observance	439	34.3

medium. Then, difference is not significant. The lay specialists' services are assumed to help the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the parishioners. I discuss later the influence of lay specialists' services in the religious practices of the respondents.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE LAY SPECIALISTS: OVERVIEW OF THE TRANSITION

In this chapter I describe and analyze the transformation that has led to the increasing prominence of the lay specialists in the sample parishes. I begin first with a brief discussion of occupational specialization. I then analyze four different parishes, and draw from the analysis a theoretical continuum of a process of change leading from the Traditional parish directed by priests to the Transformed parish in which the laity play a greater role. I end the chapter with a discussion of some possible causes underlying the transition, and differences found in the survey parishes.

The division of work and specialization in work are closely linked to each other. They allow individuals or groups to accomplish tasks for which they are particularly skilled and trained (Reitz, 1987). In hunting and gathering societies, where division of labor was mostly gender-based, there were marks of specialization. Those who were skilled in spearing animals and fish went for large game hunting and deep sea fishing, and those who were less skilled went for small game hunting and some fishing. Likewise, in horticultural societies (average size 150-200 people) there was a higher degree of specialization in economics, politics and, religion. Further, greater division of labor and specialization in agrarian societies was the basis for

different classes such as rulers (government), merchants, priests, and peasants. At present, industrial societies, which have greater increased production and consumption of resources, are known for intense specialization in the areas of government, health, education, space, science, and engineering. Marvin Harris, in his book *Culture, People, Nature* (1988), stated, "An industrial society is a society that relies on the detailed division of labor in combination with power-driven machinery to achieve mass production of goods and services. Detailed division of labor refers to the separation of production tasks into many tiny steps carried out by different workers."

What is seen in secular life is seen also in the religious sphere. Religion has embraced what is socially considered a hallmark of the human intellect: a division of the work among people with specializations. For several centuries in the Catholic Church, ritual and administrative work was divided among the three specialists: bishops, priests, and deacons. However, within the past 20 years, a new phenomenon has emerged in the Catholic parishes: the non-ordained lay specialists who work in the Catholic parishes performing several tasks that used to be the duties of the clergy. I next describe lay specialists, who they are, and what they do in the parishes with their diverse specializations.

#### A Descriptive Definition of "Lay Specialists"

The word "lay" denotes a person who is neither a cleric nor a vowed religious. In Catholic understanding, this word implies a person who is usually married, often

with a family and some secular job (Osborne, 1993). The linguistic origin of the word "laity" reflects a certain secular character. It comes from the Greek word "laikos," meaning ordinary, profane, not consecrated. The laity often meant a group of believers who were not counted among the sacred clan or clerics. In order to emphasize the importance and uniqueness of their secular character and their service to the world, the Second Vatican Council stated that "Their secular character is proper and peculiar to the laity. . . . By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in this world; that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life, which, as it were, constitutes their very existence" (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No: 31).

Lay specialists are laity in the full sense of the word; they belong to the subculture of laity, but at the same time they have a different status in the parish community. They have this status, by virtue of three qualities: their specialization, their recognition and their remuneration. I examine all three.

First, the lay specialists are *experts* in their particular field of activities. Their expertise results from a formal education and training with certification in some traditions of the Catholic Church. For example, in the survey parishes, several lay specialists hold academic degrees such as bachelor's, master's, and doctorals degrees in sacred liturgy, music, and spirituality. Some of them are without a formal degree;

nevertheless, they have been recognized for special skills and talents needed for their duties. Some of these are working toward a formal degree, taking summer courses from academic institutions, while they are actively involved in their specialized tasks.

Secondly, lay specialists are distinguished among the laity by virtue of their recognition in their parishes. They are formally appointed by the head priest (pastor), and recognized by the parish community. They are respected as professionals among the parishioners. They are approached by individuals who need their specialized services. In the sample parishes, 80% of the lay specialists are hired full-time and 20% part-time; 66% are females and 34% are males.

Thirdly, they are different from the laity by virtue of their remuneration. Volunteers assist with parish works, but the lay specialists are paid for their specialized services in the parish. Some of them are paid bi-weekly and some monthly. The full-time lay specialists receive auxiliary benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans.

These considerations permit us to make an operational definition of the lay specialist. A definition of a lay specialist in a Catholic parish is a person, male or female, married or single, who has a body of specialized knowledge in a particular area of the Catholic tradition or has demonstrated skills and readiness to acquire it. The lay specialist is appointed by the pastor, given full-time or part-time salary, and is recognized by the parish community.



### Characteristics of Lay Specialists

The concept of Human Materialism (Magnarella, 1993), that serves as a theoretical model for this research, includes in its social infrastructure component the personality characteristics of the individuals who hold structural positions and positions of power in any social organization. The personality characteristics include individuals' intellect, discourse and communicative skills, appearance, actions, and collaborative skills. The assumption is that these characteristics play vital roles in their decisions and other performances. Human Materialism (Magnarella, 1993) asserts that the characteristics of these individuals need to be appropriate in order to reach the goals expressed in the superstructural component.

In the parish organization lay specialists occupy important positions. Needless to say, their knowledge, communicative skills, appearance and collaborative skills play important roles in helping the parish reach its objectives. Before I describe the nature of their tasks, I present some characteristics of the lay specialists that I observed through one-on-one interviews with them and through my participant observation in their parish programs. I categorized my observations under the following subjects: Motivation, Education, and Collaboration. My description includes, wherever it is appropriate, a case example from one of the lay specialists.

#### Motivation

The central question for the lay specialists is "Why did the lay specialists consciously choose this position among the alternative careers?" There was not a

uniform response to the question. About 60% of the respondents said that they had a deep desire to work for the parish. When I asked them to articulate this desire, they gave responses such as "I love pastoral, spiritual dimension in my life," "I am interested in the rituals of the church," "I enjoy working with the youth," "I was interested in the choir from my childhood," "I wanted to work with people in our parish environment, it is different." About 30% pointed out that they had been involved in the parish activities for many years. When the pastor invited them to work for the parish, they accepted. About 10% indicated that they have settled in their parishes with their children and grandchildren. During these years, they have come to know several families and their particular needs. Their positions as lay specialists in the parishes offered them the opportunities to help these families and by helping them they found "enormous amount of personal happiness" in their life. Lay specialists are motivated to work for the parish members. Their motivations are generated either by personal interest, or involvement in the parish activities or the need to help the people and families they have known for several years.

A case example: A female specialist in liturgy in one of our sample parishes who came to the United States from her home country with a bachelor's degree in nursing. She pursued her master's degree in nursing at the local university. During her graduate education she frequented St. Benedict parish and was involved in a charismatic prayer group and the parish choir on Sundays. When she graduated, she took a job at the local Veterans Administration hospital and continued to be involved in the

parish. As a graduate student and later as a clinical specialist and nurse practitioner, she had experienced an intense desire to make the celebration of Sunday Mass “interesting” to the people. She revealed her interest to one of the parish council members who then introduced her to the other members. The parish council placed her in charge of the liturgy committee to coordinate various parish activities related to liturgy such as Sunday liturgy, children’s liturgy, and Rites of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). As a volunteer, her interest and skills displayed in liturgical activities were appreciated by the parishioners. Eventually she was hired by the pastor as a part-time liturgical director. Since this part-time work demanded more time than she had anticipated, she resigned her full-time job at the Veterans Administration hospital and gave her full attention to the tasks of a parish liturgist. However, the remuneration received from the parish for the part-time job was not enough to support her. She said “I knew that St. Benedict was not going to hire me full time. And I needed to support myself. So I went to teach nursing part-time in the community college and also worked about 10 hours per week as a ‘housekeeper.’” She enrolled in a summer graduate program in sacred liturgy. The parish supported her financially for her formal education and training in liturgy. She completed her graduate education over five summers and now works full time as a liturgy specialist in the parish. Her personal interest in working for the parish and her willingness to give up her financial security (her pay is not comparable to professional salaries) for the sake of the parish are evidences of the quality we are here discussing: strong motivation.

### Education

In my observations I took note not only of the motivation of the specialists, but also of the educational preparation which they had received to permit them to follow their motivation. Gallup polls with samples of 1,509 people in the United States in the 1970s indicated that the public associated 14 of a possible 34 characteristics with the image of a leader. These included bright, intelligent, exceptional abilities, decisive, high moral principles, believable, likeable, good judgment, and religious (Reitz, 1987). The 21 lay specialists in our survey parishes are an educated group: 60% of them have graduate degrees, including one doctorate; 10% of them have bachelor's degrees; 30% have had some college education and are enrolled in the diocesan certification program that gives training and formation in theology, scripture, liturgy, spirituality, and sacraments. During my one-on-one interviews with the lay specialists I found that they are well prepared for the tasks given them in the parishes. They know what (the content) they are expected to give. They have the skills to present the teachings to the parishioners. Continuing education seems to be an important factor in the education of the lay specialists. Local pastors encourage and financially support them to help them attend continuing educational programs conducted at the diocesan, regional, and national levels. Most of these programs last three to ten days, and are presented in different forms, such as seminars, workshops, and study groups. The lay specialists share their newly learned knowledge and skills with the other lay

specialists in the parish staff meetings. Such sharing seems to stimulate group interest and creativity in the parish.

A case example: a female specialist in Christian Spirituality who came to town about 15 years ago. She had a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in general experimental psychology. She sought admission to the College of Engineering at the University of Florida; she wanted a degree in engineering. She became involved in the parish prayer group, which at that time is reported to have consisted of about 100 members. Her interest and involvement in the parish began to develop far beyond the limits of the prayer group. She became a Eucharistic minister in the parish, to take communion to the sick in the local hospitals. Her interactions with the parishioners and the members of the prayer group made her realize that many people had problems, but they had no one to help them in the parish. When I asked her to clarify what she meant by "no one to help," she said that there was no one trained to help these people with their painful life problems such as family violence, separation, divorce, and relational problems. She dropped out of her engineering program at the university and sought admission to the College of Education where she obtained a specialist degree in agency correctional developmental counseling. During the final semester of her studies, she was hired part time; then went to full time as counselor in the parish. She worked about three years and six months as a resident counselor in the parish. Her work experience among the manifold human problems of the parishioners made her realize her single aim was to focus on their spiritual

problems. She said, "I felt called. In my interior feelings I felt my own spiritual reawakening of God and I wanted to help others experience the same." She decided to pursue her education in spirituality. She completed a master's degree in Theological Studies and another master's degree in Christian spirituality. Now she holds multiple academic degrees in psychology, counseling, theology and Christian spirituality and works as a full- time specialist in spirituality.

### Collaboration

But no matter how well educated the specialist, he or she will have little success in the parish without skills in a third area: collaboration. Experimental studies indicate that clear and well-defined goals can enhance group cohesiveness. The group that was given clear goals was reported to have liked the tasks assigned, individuals felt part of the group and showed greater concern for their own and the group's performance (Reitz,1989). The survey parishes have clear goals that are relevant to the needs of the particular demographics of the parishioners. For example, St. Benedict parish provides services to the students and families. The parish wants to meet the needs of the students as well as the needs of the families. St. Thomas offers services to the families and the retired and elderly. The lay specialists who work together to achieve the specific goals of their parishes function as a team, in the general atmosphere of communication, cooperation, and mutual support.

Collaborative skills in the lay specialists seems warranted by the nature of their tasks. They are independent individuals, but they are dependent on each other for the

successful completion of the parish tasks. This needs further explanation. For example, when a couple comes to the parish to be married in the church, the process appear simple: the couple meets with a priest and gets married at the altar. But it is a more complex phenomenon. The couple first contacts a priest in the parish and formally begins the marriage preparation period that lasts about six months. During this six-month period, the couple interacts with several lay specialists in the parish. For example, the specialists in marriage and family help the couple with FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study), and arrange several supportive programs such as Pre-Cana and Engaged Encounter. The liturgy specialist helps the couple with the ritual celebrations. The specialist in music helps to plan and choose the music in the ritual celebrations. Spiritual formation is considered one of the vital elements in the marriage preparations. The couples are encouraged to seek a deeper awareness of their spiritual experience of God through scripture readings, prayers, and short term retreats. The specialist in spirituality is available in the parish to help the couples address their spiritual needs. Thus, the marriage preparation is seen as a team effort that involves collaboration of the priests and lay specialists who bring knowledge, and skills that are considered vital for the preparation of the couples to the Sacrament of Marriage.

One forum in which a high level of collaboration seems to take place is that of the pastoral staff meetings, a collaborative event in which status differences between clergy and laity are leveled. The schedule of pastoral staff meetings varies

from parish to parish: weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly. The staff meetings often consist of the priests (the pastor and the associates) and the lay specialists. Sometimes the support staff (office manager, finance officer) are invited to participate in the meeting. The meeting is facilitated by a pastoral staff member who could be one of the priests or a lay specialist. In the meetings they inform each other about what has happened in the parish: the people admitted in the hospital; the children born to the parish members; the people in marriage preparations; the persons going to be married; the persons divorced or separated; the people who died; the students who graduated; the parishioners who need special help. They discuss with each other how they have helped people in the parishes. They talk at length about what needs to be done further to help the parishioners. They inform each other about the forthcoming events, such as Sacramental celebrations (Marriage, Baptism), and meetings with special groups such as parish council, finance council, stewardship council, retreats and study groups. In all the interactions, there is a constant revision of temporal responsibilities to meet the myriad needs of the parishioners. Their communication with each other in the pastoral staff meetings brings out their expertise and experience rather than their rank or authority such as clergy or laity. They seem to exhibit a considerable amount of influence on each other in the pastoral staff meetings. Such influences appear to emanate from their expertise with a particular problem rather than from their status as either clergy or laity.



A case example: Approximately two years ago, there was a "crisis" in one of the survey parishes. The manner in which the crisis was handled by the priests and lay specialists indicates the level of their collaboration in the parish. The pastor of a particular parish laid off one of the two directors of religious education (DRE) who were husband and wife, due to lack of financial resources in the parish budget. This was not well received by the former DRE director and some parishioners. The couple (both DREs) decided to leave the parish and seek jobs in another parish. The parish was left without a DRE and a few families were discontented with the pastor's decision. I call this situation a "crisis" because some important interests of the parish were threatened. Children needed religious education, but they had no religious education director. Dissatisfied parents of these children could give up their present parish membership and choose another parish for the religious education of their children. Some families threatened to leave the parish. Consequently, the parish contributions could have been affected by the "crisis." At this juncture, the lay specialists of this particular parish became the major resource. They handled the critical situation until a new DRE was hired. They divided the work of the DRE: the specialist in liturgy took charge of planning the religious education program for the adult members of the family. The coordinator of Baptism took the responsibility of coordinating the catechists, who help with the religious education program for the children. The specialists in spirituality and marriage and family became members of the new DRE search committee, headed by one of the associate priests. A new

director was hired after six months. In the meantime, the lay specialists engaged in informal interactions with those parents who indicated some discontent due to the departure of the previous DREs. These informal interactions often took place in casual conversations after the Sunday Masses or some friendly home visits. These informal interactions gave ample opportunities for the discontented parents and families to vent their feelings and to come to accept the situation of their parish. As a result, not all those families that threatened to leave the parish did. Two families are reported to have left the parish for a neighboring parish in the same town. The level of parish contributions to the parish stayed the same as before the crisis. Several parents who were once discontented at the time of "crisis" are again involved in the parish activities. As we have observed, this crisis is an example of how the lay specialists have played a collaborative role that is characterized by their warm, nonjudgmental, generous and sympathetic attitudes. They are maintaining the internal balances of the parish.

#### Lay Specialists' Tasks

The preceding presented some characteristics of effective lay specialists. But what specifically do they actually do in the parishes? The lay specialists perform several specialized tasks in Catholic parishes. This section delineates the tasks they perform in the survey parishes. Table 44 presents the profile of specialized tasks in St. Thomas, St. Benedict, St. Justin, and St. Francis and those who perform them.

TABLE 44  
The Profile of Parish Activities and Agents, by Parish  
(P = Priest; LS = Lay Specialist; LV = Lay Volunteer)

Functions	St. Thomas	St. Benedict	St. Justin	St. Francis
1. Liturgy Planning	P	LS	LV	LV
2. Training Lit. Mins.	P	LS	LV	LV
3. Sacramental Preparation	P	LS	LS	LS
4. CCD Program	LS	LS	LS	LS
5. RCIA Program	LV	LS	LS	LS
6. Marriage/Family Ministry	LS	LS	P	LS
7. Youth Ministry	LS	LS	LS	LS
8. Adult Education	LV	LS	LS	P
9. Minis. Divorce/Separation	LV	LS	LV	P
10. Bereavement Ministry	LV	LV	LS	LS
11. Alcoholic Anonymous	LV	-	-	-
12. Alanon	LV	-	-	-
13. Golden Gators	-	-	-	-
14. Pax Christi	-	LV	-	-
15. Alpha Program	-	LS	-	-
16. Evangel./Mission	P	LS	LV	LV
17. Spiritual Retreat	P	LS	P	P
18. Prayer Group	LV	LV	LV	LV
19. Ministry to Sick	LV	LV	LS	LV
20. Singles Support	LV	LS	-	-
21. Right to Life	LV	LV	-	LV
22. Music Ministry	LS	LS	LS	LS
22. Marriage Preparation	P	LS	P	LS
23. Spiritual Director	P	LS	P	P
24. Pastoral Counselling	P	P	P	P
25. Crisis Management	-	LS	P	P
26. Pastoral Assistant	-	-	LS	LS

Table 44 presents the variety of tasks that are carried out in the survey parishes and that in theory involve the lay specialists being discussed in this chapter. The table

does not include those specifically liturgical tasks—celebration of Mass or hearing of Confessions—which only the priests are authorized to perform, or those liturgical tasks which are generally assigned to lay volunteers—greeters, ushers, lectors (for the pre-Gospel readings at Mass, two on Sundays, one on weekdays). The lay specialists may do these latter activities, but in their capacity as parishioners, not as professional parish employees. In theory every one of the activities on the Table 44 could be performed by a lay specialist. But a cursory examination shows that their assumption of these tasks has been partial, and that it differs from parish to parish.

In Table 45 below, I have retabulated the data from the preceding table, comparing the parishes quantitatively on these matters.

TABLE 45  
Percentages of Parish Activities and Agents, by Parish

	Priests	Lay Specialists	Volunteers
St. Thomas (%)	8 36.3	4 18.2	10 45.5
St. Benedict (%)	1 4.3	15 65.2	7 30.5
St. Justin (%)	6 28.6	9 42.9	6 28.5
St. Francis (%)	6 28.6	9 42.9	6 28.5

The distribution shown in Table 45 indicates the variation in number and percentage of specialized tasks performed by the lay specialists in our survey parishes. The lay specialists' tasks are not evenly spread across the parishes. St. Thomas has the least percentage of lay specialists' tasks and St. Benedict has the largest. St. Justin and St. Francis have the same percentage of specialists' tasks. Three types of parishes are classified thus: (i) Type One: Traditional parish--St. Thomas, (ii) Type Two: Transitional parish--St. Justin and St. Francis, (iii) Type Three: Transformed parish--St. Benedict. My classification is based mainly on who does "the essential tasks" in the Catholic parishes. Essential tasks are spiritual direction, and "sacramental work" such as Eucharist, Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, and Marriage. The sacramental work consists of planning, training, instructing, and presiding over the ritual celebrations.

Type One: A traditional parish. In a Type One parish, the priests seem to be in charge of most of the essential tasks. The parish priests are directly involved in spiritual direction and the sacramental tasks. The term "directly" means that the priests are involved with the people personally from the planning session to the ritual celebrations. Lay volunteers help the priests, or in conventional language "help out the Father," in the ritual celebrations of the sacraments, by setting the things up needed for the celebrations, singing in the choir, and hosting social celebrations soon after the ritual celebrations. Lay volunteers in a Type One parish are in charge of a host of social ministries that are somehow related to the different segment of the

parish population such as the separated, divorced, single, sick, elderly, widowed, and the grieving. Those who run these ministries very much depend on their pastor for planning and approval. However, three tasks, namely religious education, music ministry, and youth ministry, are performed in a Type One parish by the lay specialists. Unlike the volunteers, these lay specialists enjoy a certain amount of independence in planning and training. For example, the music director could choose appropriate hymns for the Mass and train the choir members. However, they are expected to consult the pastor for the implementation of their plans. In a Type One parish the pastor is the dominant figure who sets the orientation for the parish. He may divide the work among his parishioners who may have been qualified for the work or showed some willingness to work either for salary or free. The tasks given to lay specialists are very minimal.

Type Three: A transformed parish. For analytic purposes I skip immediately to the transformed parish to better compare it to the traditional parish. In the transformed parish most of the essential tasks are divided and given to the full-time or part-time lay specialists. For example, a lay person who has a specialization in spirituality is hired as a full-time spiritual director to help the parishioners with spiritual problems. Another lay person who is a specialist in liturgy is hired as a full-time liturgy director to take care of the liturgical or ritual celebrations. Almost all the sacramental work in a Type Three parish is performed by the lay specialists. That is to say, the lay specialists do the planning, training, and instructing of the parishioners

for such sacraments as Baptism, Confirmation, Communion, and Marriage. The priests preside over the ritual celebrations of the sacraments by virtue of their priestly ordination. However, the priests' roles in the sacramental tasks are not limited only to presiding over the ritual celebrations. They are invited by the lay specialists to give pastoral instructions to special groups such as the adult Baptism group, Confirmation group, and marriage couples. They are invited to visit and speak to the children who are preparing for First Communion. These occasional visits and special pastoral instructions to the groups in the parish give the priests opportunities to know the participants before the actual ritual celebrations take place. Since lay specialists are directly involved with the parishioners, the priests' involvement with the parishioners on personal levels tends to be reduced in the Type Three (transformed) parish.

Unlike in a Type One parish where volunteers help the priests, in a Type Three parish, volunteers help the lay specialists. They receive the directions for their activities directly from the lay specialists. For all practical reasons, lay specialists are considered the "heads" for the volunteers. Each lay specialist recruits volunteers to help in particular tasks. For example, the liturgy director can have a host of volunteers (up to two hundred) to help in the ritual celebrations of the sacraments. These volunteers are instructed and trained by the liturgy director as lectors, eucharistic ministers, altar servers, and ushers.

Lay specialists in a Type Three parish enjoy more independence than those in a Type One parish. They plan activities and train and instruct the members within

their area of specialization. Unlike the lay specialists in a Type One parish, these lay specialists are not expected to get the approval of the pastor for the individual activities of their specialization. They meet once a week with the pastor and other priests collectively in the pastoral staff meetings and present information about their work in their particular fields. They take decisions collectively if some major changes are needed in the policies related to their ministries. For example, they discuss special programs such as retreats, discussion groups, study groups in the season of Lent. They decide collectively who would be in charge and how those programs would benefit the parishioners. Persons in charge of such programs are expected to construct plans and organize the programs. However, they consult with the pastor to solve problems if they arise in their respective work fields. In a Type Three parish, the pastor is not the dominant figure. He is seen more as a consultant and overseer of the several tasks that are performed by the lay specialists.

Type Two: A transitional parish. I now backtrack to examine the transitional parish intermediate between the traditional and transformed parish. In a Type Two parish, the essential tasks are divided between the priests and lay specialists. For example, the spiritual direction is given by the priests and the planning and training in some of the sacramental work are performed by the lay specialists. The instruction in the sacramental work is shared by the priests and the lay specialists. In a Type Two parish, volunteers work under the lay specialists and priests. For example, the DRE has about 30 volunteers to provide religious education to the children. These



volunteers are recruited and trained by the specialist. And the priests are helped by the volunteers in the sacramental work. For example, a volunteer helps the priest to coordinate the liturgy committee and its activities in the parish, and another volunteer acts as a contact person in the parish for the marriage preparations. In the survey area, I have identified two parishes that belong to Type Two. In these parishes there are pastoral assistants who work closely with the priests in several tasks such as sacramental ministry to the sick, funerals, and bereavement and coordinating hospital ministry.

Lay specialists in the transitional parish seem to enjoy more independence than the lay specialists in a traditional parish. However, they do not have the complete autonomy like the lay specialists in the Type Three, transformed, parish. The lay specialists in the transitional parish meet with the pastor bi-weekly and take decisions collectively, but they are to be approved by the pastor. Any later modifications in the collective decisions are made in the one-on-one meeting with the pastor. The pastor retains the authority to himself to modify or to change the plans. However, the lay specialists enjoy more autonomy in non-sacramental work such as youth ministry and ministry to the sick. In a Type Two parish the pastor is a dominant figure. But he is also consultant and overseer of some tasks performed by lay specialists.

The preceding can be summed up as follows: We have identified three distinct types of participants in the parish work: the ordained priests, lay volunteers, and the lay specialists. The first two types have existed from time immemorial. The third

type, the salaried lay specialist, represents a phenomenon that has emerged in the decades following Vatican II (1962-1965). In the typical preconciliar Catholic parish in the United States, the paid lay specialists were generally unknown and absent. But in the postconciliar Catholic Church, the parish without at least one or two lay specialists is probably the exception. The emergence of these lay specialists has been one of the major features of the changes that have come over the Catholic parishes in the survey area. I have no data to support whether this shift into increasing lay ecclesiastical specialization has occurred uniformly in the postconciliar Universal Church in such places as Asia, Africa, Europe, or South America. This research establishes the emerging prominence of lay specialization in the four parishes.

I have proposed a continuum from a Type One parish in which the role of the priest remains strong, through a transitional Type Two parish in which the lay specialists become gradually more important, into a Type Three parish in which the role of the lay specialists in the parish is now central and prominent, and in which a substantial proportion of the parish budget (75%) is allocated to paying the salaries of these lay specialists. This logically defensible continuum receives empirical support as well from the tabular data gathered in the survey. I have identified the three types of parishes as defined by the division of the essential work in the parish.

What are the causes and consequences of this shift into lay specialization at the parish level? While I explore the consequences below, I speculate here briefly on two causes. The emerging phenomenon of lay specialists' involvement in essential

work formerly reserved to the ordained priests has to be understood as an adaptation to several societal factors operating simultaneously. One factor is the radical decline in priestly vocation that has come in the wake of Vatican II. From a simple material point of view, there are too few priests to carry out the increased tasks of a parish. These tasks need particular training and education of several persons. A second factor is the increased social status of the laity. In the traditional Catholicism of immigrant America, the priest was the most knowledgeable person on the broadest variety of issues in the parish. As this study indicates this is no longer the case. The laity are specialized in every branch of science including religion. There are other factors beyond the two which I briefly presented here. In this chapter I have shown that to some degree all four survey parishes take part in the process of the shift to lay specialists. In the following chapter I examine the lay specialists' roles in more specific detail.

## CHAPTER 7

### SPECIFIC ROLES OF THE LAY SPECIALISTS

The preceding chapter, which presented an overview of lay specialists in the sample parishes was general in focus. In this chapter I go into more ethnographic detail about what the specialists actually do in the sample parishes.

#### Liturgy Specialist

National survey results indicate that the majority of those lay persons involved in Church liturgy are females (58%). My survey results concur with the national findings. Women are in charge of the liturgical arrangements in all four parishes. St. Benedict parish has a full-time liturgy director. St. Thomas, St. Justin, and St. Francis have no liturgy specialists. In these parishes the functions of a liturgist are conjoined with the functions of other specialists such as director of Music and director of Religious Education and Pastoral Assistant. I discuss in this chapter which functions are linked with the other specialists. The following descriptions of the functions of the liturgy director are obtained from my personal interviews with lay specialists and observations of the liturgical activities in the parishes.

The tasks assigned to the specialist in liturgy seem to be grounded on three principles that are considered important by the parishes: 1) All the responsibilities and functions of a liturgist are expected to create and maintain an atmosphere that would

be helpful to ritual celebrations, Christian formation and prayer. 2) The liturgist is expected to promote, and to encourage volunteers in various liturgical programs and activities. (3) The liturgist is expected to call parishioners for periodic assessment about parish needs and elicit feedback from all the participants in various liturgical activities.

Based on these three principles, various tasks are spelled out. The primary task of the liturgist is to prepare Sunday and weekday Eucharistic rituals. The rituals include the special seasonal celebrations, including Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter-Pentecost, and other Holy Days of Obligation, such as the Feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception. In practice, the liturgist coordinates the work of the clergy, music director, and others, such as the lectors, altar servers, and Eucharistic ministers.

Preparation for the Eucharistic rituals is ongoing. The liturgist usually calls for periodical meetings with those in charge of the liturgical matters and plans for the ritual celebrations. The meetings take place as often as four to six times a year.

For example, in the parish of St. Benedict the liturgy specialist calls for four formal meetings a year with the clergy and music director. Two meetings are held around Advent and Lent, and two before the University starts Fall and Spring semesters. Such meetings start with a prayer. The liturgy director presents the general liturgical theme of the season and invites the participants to discuss the theme, relating it to the Scripture readings and to the needs of the local church (parish). This formal meeting enables the music director to select appropriate songs that would fit

into the liturgical season. The liturgy specialist sets the time for rehearsals and practices of rituals as needed. The rehearsals and practices are mainly held during the Sacred Triduum, that is, on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday of the Holy Week. A portion of time is devoted also to review how well the previous season was observed.

The liturgy specialist makes notes on extra things to be taken care of during particular seasons and assigns persons to these tasks. For example, there would be extra time allotted for Confession during the Sacred Triduum, and so the specialist assigns individual priests to be available during that period of time. The meetings are planned and conducted by the liturgy specialist. The pastor participates in meetings along with his associate priests. He does not hold a special place in meetings by virtue of his position as the pastor, although he can intervene with his pastoral authority if he considers it necessary. In general, however, in the transformed parish discussed in the preceding chapter, the pastor and other priests seem to adhere to the directions of the liturgy specialist.

The liturgy director is in charge of the celebration of all the rituals that take place in the parish, Infant Baptism, Marriage, Reconciliation, First Communion, Confirmation, Sacrament of the Sick, Ordinations, Funerals, Communion Services, Liturgy of the Hours, and other prayer services and devotions. In St. Justin parish, the DRE (female) has the responsibility of preparing the children for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. In addition to that, she supervises the Family Liturgy

Program that focuses on liturgical celebration for children. In St. Francis, the responsibility for the above ritual celebrations is taken by lay volunteers under the leadership of the pastoral assistant. The full-time liturgy specialist in St. Benedict has the responsibility for all the ritual celebrations. She meets with special groups for planning and celebration. For example, she meets with couples several months before their wedding and prepares them for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. The preparation involves a brief discussion about the spirituality of marriage, selection of appropriate readings from the Scriptures and hymns, and cultural adaptations, such as pews and unity candles. When there is a funeral in the parish, she meets with the families of the deceased and helps them plan a funeral service that will bring peace to the minds of those who suffer the loss of a loved one.

The liturgy director has to be skilled in team work. The manifold celebrations of sacraments in the parish demand that the liturgical director be accommodative and collaborative. The liturgist in St. Benedict works in close collaboration with the RCIA director and DRE for the celebration of RCIA rites (adults and children), Infant Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. Sometimes the liturgist acts also as a resource person to RCIA and religious education directors in the preparation of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist for children and adults. Besides, the liturgist is expected to inform and implement the New Rites of the Catholic Church as they would be periodically reviewed by the

Official Church and recommend ongoing seminars to the priests and other specialists about New Rituals and liturgical documents.

The liturgy specialist is also the head of the liturgical committee in the parish. The liturgical committee consists of six to ten members of the parish appointed by the pastor. The four parishes of our survey each have liturgical committees and each is composed of males and females. At St. Thomas it is called the parish worship committee. The liturgy committees at St. Thomas, St. Justin, and St. Francis are headed by lay volunteers. The liturgical director in St. Benedict is the head of the liturgical committee.

In collaboration with the liturgy committee, the director recruits and trains all the liturgical servers such as lectors (readers), altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, and hospitality persons (ushers). The lector is in charge of the Scripture readings in the Eucharist Mass. On Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, there are three readings: the first from the Old Testament, the second usually from one of the letters of St. Paul or other apostolic writings, and the third from one of the four Gospels. The lector, either a male or a female, stands in front of the congregation and reads the Scriptures as designated in the reading book.

Until recently only males were the altar servers, but now altar servers can also be female after the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments issued a letter on March 15, 1994, allowing female altar servers. Altar servers stand near the altar and assist the priest presiding at the Mass and other ritual celebrations.



The Eucharistic ministers, male and female, assist the priest in distributing Holy Communion to the people. In some parishes the Eucharistic ministers take Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals and nursing homes. The hospitality persons, also called ushers, welcome those who come to the church, collect the money baskets, and say goodbye or good day at the exit.

The liturgy director has the obligation of offering needed educational, spiritual, and social support to these liturgical ministers. The liturgist in St. Benedict parish gives periodic training sessions (three times a year) for these ministers, and holds an annual liturgical minister's gathering to foster team spirit among them.

The liturgy specialist in St. Benedict shares in some administrative responsibilities in the parish. The priests' Mass schedule and parish/hospital beeper coverage schedule are coordinated by the liturgist. St. Thomas priests also have a beeper coverage system, but the schedule of the coverage is coordinated by one of the priests. St. Justin and St. Francis parishes cover their parishes in the traditional ways: those who need the services of the priests would telephone the office. Other functions of the liturgy director are 1) to prepare an annual budget and submit it to the pastor, 2) to purchase liturgical materials, including wine, hosts, and candles, 3) to direct and supervise sacristy personnel, and 4) to interview and hire liturgical personnel, such as sacristans.

The tasks of the liturgist in general extend beyond the needs of their own parishes. For example, the liturgy specialist in St. Benedict parish is an active member

in the liturgical commission at the Diocesan level. The Diocesan Liturgical Commission profits from her expertise in planning and preparing for the liturgical celebrations at the diocesan level. The parish of St. Benedict has adopted St. James Catholic parish in the State of Chiapas, Mexico, as a sister parish. The parishioners of St. Benedict help the members of St. James parish with money, medicine, and services. Each year volunteers, especially medical professionals, are organized to go to Chiapas and help the people with medical treatments. The liturgist in St. Benedict coordinates the mission trips to Mexico that take place during the summer months. National studies indicate that the liturgists are mostly involved in the area of their expertise such as planning, and training. Our study finds that the liturgy specialist's involvement in the parish goes beyond the boundaries of, in this case, her specialist area into administration and coordination of several parish-related activities.

### Spirituality Specialist

My survey indicated that there is only one parish in our survey that has a specialist in spirituality. In the other three parishes spiritual programs are under the responsibility of the priests. In St. Benedict parish a female, full-time lay specialist is in charge of parish spirituality programs. She holds a master's degree in theological studies and another master's degree in Christian spirituality. She has been working in the parish as a specialist for the past eight years. National surveys do not indicate the existence of this position in the Catholic parishes because the spiritual domain in the parishes has traditionally been under the authority of the priests. When the

parishioners had any kind of spiritual problems, they approached the priests, either for the Sacrament of Confession or spiritual direction, or a combination of both. Priests periodically arranged spiritual retreats for their parishioners. They encouraged their members to engage in spiritual activities, such as group prayers, spiritual readings, and reaching out to others in need. However, a formal lay position as a spirituality specialist has made a shift in the spiritual activities of the parish. Though the priests continue to give spiritual direction to those who choose to go to them, they are not directly in charge of the parish spiritual programs. A full-time lay specialist plans, trains, and directs the spiritual programs of the parish. The priests make referrals to the specialists in the events where they decide to have the input of the specialist. In this section I describe the tasks that are performed by the specialist in spirituality.

From my one-on-one interview with this specialist I have learned that the greater part of her time has been spent in spiritual direction of various individuals. When I asked her to speak about the nature of problems addressed in the spiritual direction she said, "People come with different kinds of problems that disturb their regular life. They are related to their religious beliefs such as 'how to grow in my faith,' and religious sentiments such as 'I feel that I am afraid of God,' and human problems such as health, divorce, relational disruption, career change, and stress." Whatever the nature of the individual problems, the specialist said that she tries to bring a spiritual dimension into the life of the individuals. The specialist meets the

individuals by appointments mostly in the evenings because it is the convenient time for those who work during the day. However, she helps walk-in parishioners who seek advice on an emergency basis.

One other significant task of this specialist is to be a retreat consultant and retreat director for the parishioners. I observed in the parish that individual and small group retreats are common practices, especially in the weekends and Christmas and summer holidays. Such retreats last two to three days, with planned activities that include meeting and talking to the specialists about their individual problems, reading the Bible, and spending more time in prayers either at home or in the church. My interview with those who had participated in such a retreat showed that they liked it because it gave them a break from their regular busy way of life. They do not have to travel to the diocesan or regional retreat centers and spend time away from their families.

The specialist in spirituality at St. Benedict's has several other tasks. She coordinates and facilitates various small groups such as spiritual growth groups, centering prayer groups, film and video discussion group on spirituality and prayer and the Catholic graduate student association. She is one of the representatives of the Campus Ministry Cooperative that meets once a week to share and discuss the common interest and issues related to the campus ministry in the community. She functions as an active liaison to the Christian Ministry Task Force, a group that encourages local volunteer opportunities for the parishioners. And she represents the

staff in the Florida Catholic Campus Ministers Association and the National Catholic Campus Ministers Association.

In an ideal 40-hour work week, the specialist said that her schedule would be 68% (27.2 hrs) of her time spent in spiritual direction and retreat directed in the office; 13% (5.2 hrs) of her time seems to go in the administrative work such as attending weekly pastoral staff meetings, planning and scheduling meetings with the parishioners; 7% (2.8 hrs) of her time is spent for the professional meetings in Campus Ministry Cooperation, Florida Catholic Campus Ministers, and Campus Ministers Association, and about 12% (4.8 hrs) of her time is spent reading books, journals, and professional newsletters, and preparing for retreats and group meetings. During my interview she said that the combination of programs changes from year to year and she seems to enjoy that flexibility. She can develop new programs to meet the needs of the parish at particular periods of time.

#### Religious Education Specialist

A religious education specialist is traditionally called a director of religious education (DRE). National studies indicate that it is one of the longest tenured positions in the Catholic parishes. The parishes that had religious sisters or brothers employed them as DREs. However, when the number of religious sisters and brothers declined, pastors employed qualified lay people who were in most cases their own parishioners. There are four female religious education lay specialists in our survey area. They are full-time employees in their own respective parishes. They differ in

their education and the tasks they perform in their parishes. Two out of four have a bachelor's degree in education and teacher training. All of them have some background in theology obtained either from a theological school or through the diocesan ministry program. In this section I describe the common nature of their tasks and then indicate how the tasks differ in the three types of parishes.

The common tasks for the religious education specialists in our area are 1) planning curriculum, 2) recruiting, training, coordinating, and supervising volunteers from the parish to help in the programs, 3) purchasing needed materials such as texts for religious education classes, and 4) preparing the children for the sacraments: Infant Baptism, First Confession, First Communion, and Confirmation.

The tasks that differ relate to the type of parish. In the traditional Type One parish, the religious education specialist works in the environment of an interparish school. The term "interparish school" signifies that the school belongs to the four Catholic parishes in the community. It is a combined primary and middle school that has students from the area Catholic parishes. The school has a separate DRE to take care of the school religious educational programs. However, the parish religious education specialist is expected to be a resource person to the Interparish school religious program and to work in close collaboration with the principal of the school in matters that are related to the sacramental preparations of the students. Unlike the specialists in Type Two and Type Three parishes, the specialist in a Type One parish

is responsible for conducting a one-week vacation Bible school to give children basic knowledge of Sacred Scripture.

In the transformed Type Three parish, the specialist is in charge of RCIC (Rites of Christian Initiation for Children), also known as the Children's Catechumenate Program. This program is designed for the children who were not baptized when they were infants. The specialist recruits and trains volunteers to carry out this program. The specialist in this parish develops also an adult education program in collaboration with the specialists in other areas of the parish. The adult education program addresses Christian faith and moral issues of the parishioners. Traditionally this program has been under the direct supervision and direction of the priests. This shift certainly marks a change in direction and supervision in the adult education program.

In the transitional Type Two parish, the religious education specialist has the additional tasks of coordinating RCIA (Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults) and adult education program. The specialist also is responsible for the family liturgy program. This program is focused on improving the children's participation in the Mass and other sacraments.

There is no uniform set of tasks for the specialists in religious education in our survey parishes. Though they have several common tasks, the variation in the number and the nature of their assignments seems to depend very much on the needs of the individual parish and pastor.

### Marriage and Family Specialist

Traditionally the pastors and the associate priests have been the specialists for marriage and family issues in the Catholic parishes. They met with the couples and instructed them on the Sacrament of Marriage and celebrated the marriage at the altar. If some relational problems were to rise between the couples after the marriage, the priests were approached as mediators to settle the problems. However, a shift is occurring in matters related to marriage and family. The specialists in marriage and family issues are hired as full-time or part-time employees in the parishes. These specialists perform about 80% of the tasks that used to be done by the priests. I discuss later in this chapter the possible reasons for this shift. In this section I describe the nature of the tasks performed by the lay specialists.

In our survey area, three parishes have lay specialists in marriage and family ministry. Once again, I did not find uniformity in their educational background or in tasks assigned to them. The specialist in the traditional Type One parish is a married female, with no formal education in marriage and family issues. She has been trained by the parish priests, and has 15 years experience. Her task consists primarily of meeting with the couples first, answering their questions regarding the Sacrament of Marriage, and scheduling them to meet with the priests in the parish. In practice this means that before a couple goes to meet with the priests for instructions, they know from the specialist what is required in the Church for the Sacrament of Marriage. In Type Two and Type Three parishes, the specialists in marriage and family are the



husband and wife who work 20 hours per week in one of the Type Two parishes and 30 hours per week in the Type Three parish. The following description of the tasks pertains to the same couple who work as specialists in two parishes. Each one has a master's degree in marriage and family therapy.

The tasks of the specialists in marriage and family can be divided into two sections, administrative and developmental. First I describe how the lay specialists are involved at the administrative level. Administrative work in marriage and family involves the documentation of marriage preparation papers, such as Baptism certificates, Confirmation certificates, letters of freedom to marry, and dispensation if the couples belong to different faith traditions. The specialists collect these documents from the couple to be married and file them. It is also the responsibility of the lay specialists to deal with the annulment documentation. They assist the priests in the preparation and process of annulments. This process usually takes about six to eight months to work through the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. In cases where the engaged couple decide to get married in another place, the specialists contact the pastor of the particular parish and send him the required documents ahead for the celebration of the sacrament.

The specialists in marriage and family have several developmental tasks in the parish. Developmental tasks are all kinds of activities which help the engaged couples to understand the nature of committed relationships involved in marriage and dignity of the family. The lay specialists engage in such activities in the following ways.

They administer premarital assessment instruments such as FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study), which is intended to inform the couple of the strengths and weaknesses in various areas of their personal relationships. The specialists provide counseling review sessions to the engaged couple immediately after the FOCCUS. The specialists determine the number of review sessions depending on the nature of problems identified through FOCCUS.

The marriage and family specialists form network relations in the process of preparing couples for the sacramental celebration of marriage. For example, "Journey Couple" is a program designed by the lay specialists to foster network relationships between the couples and the parishioners. According to this program, the specialists assign a married couple from the parish to each engaged couple to pray for the engaged couple during the preparation period and after the wedding. The assignees are called the "Journey Couple," which connotes that they journey with the engaged couples through their prayers and good wishes. These journey couples are recruited from the parish and trained by the specialists. Likewise, the "Sponsor Couple" is another program that promotes interactions among the parishioners. The specialists call for volunteers and train them to help the engaged couples for the Sacrament of Marriage. The sponsor couples share their married life experiences with the engaged couples and encourage them to develop positive attitudes towards married life.

Apart from the tasks related to the Sacrament of Marriage, the lay specialists perform other tasks, such as providing needed counseling for individuals, couples, and

families on issues related to marriage and family. They encourage the parish couples to attend the Marriage Encounter Program conducted at the regional or diocesan level. This program is aimed at improving the communication skills of the married couples. The specialists make referrals to local counselors when they perceive the need for intense specialized counseling, for example, if there appears to be a need for clinical counseling. They provide occasional mini-marriage enrichment retreats for the parishioners. They deliver talks to RCIA, MOMS (a support group for the mothers of teen age children) and youth groups. In a transitional Type Two parish, the specialists also train volunteer couples to co-lead the Sacrament of Baptism preparation program. This work is performed in Type Three parish by the specialist in religious education.

#### Music Specialist

Specialists in music have been part of the parish staff in almost all Catholic parishes. Some of them had professional training in music and several others earned the title by their experiences. In several parishes the roles of the liturgy specialist and the music specialist tend to overlap because their activities are related to the same ritual celebration of the sacraments in the parish churches. National studies indicate that the specialists in music are involved also in several activities such as Liturgy planning, and coordinating the liturgical ministers. However, in the survey parishes, I found four music specialists who are involved in tasks that pertain to their specialization, namely to parish music and music-related organizational activities. Although we find uniformity of activities among our area music specialists, their

educational backgrounds vary. Of the four music specialists, two are males and two are females. Two of them hold graduate degrees in music; of the other two, one has undergraduate degree, and the other is attending school working towards a degree. In this section I describe the kind of tasks that they are performing in their parishes.

The parish ritual celebrations have gone through many changes within the past 30 years. In the past the priest was the center of the celebrations and the parishioners simply watched what was going on. However, since the Second Vatican Council importance has been given to the active participation of the people in the celebrations. People are encouraged to sing the songs and the responses that are part of the ritual celebrations. Community singing in the spirit of prayer was presented to the people as the expression of their faith (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No: 1158) and the role of the music specialist who leads the people is of paramount importance.

In our survey parishes, the principle goal of the music specialists is to foster a prayerful and singing assembly through ritual celebrations, especially the Sunday Masses. The assembly gathered for Sunday Masses is encouraged to sing by the leading choir group that usually consists of 5 to 20 parishioners. One of the primary tasks of the music specialists is to recruit volunteers to join the choir groups and train them weekly before the Sunday Masses. To my surprise, I found that the four specialists have formed many choir groups in their respective parishes, so that they can lead each Sunday Mass with a different choir group. The music specialist in a Type Three parish has six different choir groups to lead the six different gathering of

people in the Masses. In any given weekend 17 Sunday Masses are celebrated in our survey area. This would mean that there are 17 voluntary choir groups that lead the assembly into singing in the Masses on Sundays. In my one-on-one interviews with the music specialists I learned about the problems they run into recruiting and training these volunteers. In the transformed Type Three parish, the University parish of St. Benedict, sustaining regular choir groups is the difficult problem because of the fluctuation of the parish population. The students complete their studies and leave the parish; the professors move out of the parish due to change of place of career. Students and faculty go out of town during summer vacations. These constant moves present serious challenges to the specialist who wants to maintain regular choir groups to lead the singing. As I have observed in this Type Three parish, when there is no choir group available, someone performs the cantor role (lead the people in singing) in the Mass. This often happens in the Vigil Mass on Saturdays. The same turnover problems are seen in other parishes, but not so acutely as in the university parish.

Besides the Sunday Masses, the music specialists have the responsibilities for providing music and choir for several other ritual celebrations, such as weddings, common reconciliation services, and funerals. They plan the ritual music with the liturgy specialists or with the parish worship committee. Thus they coordinate the theme and selection of songs with the Scripture readings and general spirit of the season such as Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. The ritual celebrations of weddings

or funerals in the parish necessitate interactions between the music specialist and the family members. The specialists meet with the families and discuss the selection of appropriate songs and music that suit the celebration. The music specialists are often seen in community gatherings because of the nature of their tasks. They are present in the church every time the community gathers for worship, which happens every weekend and the days of special ritual celebrations. Because of the importance of music in the liturgy and the importance of people's active participation in the rituals, the tasks of music specialists are considered to be very important to the parish.

#### Youth Specialist

Youth specialists, as the name implies, work with one segment of the parish community, namely the youth of the parish, which includes the college, high school, and middle school students. They are, in general, involved in the religious and social programs for the youth. There are four youth specialists in our survey parishes: two males and two females. Their educational background varies: one of them is working on a graduate degree; two are certified youth religious educators; one of them has some college education with several years of work experience in the parish. Their tasks differ according to the demographics of the parishes. However, I will describe first the tasks that seem similar and then indicate the difference.

The similarity of tasks among the youth specialists is based on the perceived need of helping the youth in their Christian formation. As I discussed in Chapter 3 on human problems, teenagers are challenged by sociocultural forces which are often

believed to leave indelible marks on them. Youth specialists devise programs, which have social and spiritual dimensions, and invite the teenagers to participate in groups. In groups the students discuss their life experiences and find ways and means to relate their experiences to Christian teachings. The youth specialists often play the roles of mediator in discussions and a guide to the Christian teachings.

The specialists oversee all aspects of youth programs, such as planning social activities, supplying materials for reading, and discussion. Like the specialists in other areas, youth specialists have volunteers to assist in the work. Usually volunteers are recruited and trained by the specialists. The dynamics of recruiting and training the volunteers are important in the youth work. One area parish has a youth program called Alpha, which is designed to help college-age students. They meet once a month for social activities and group discussions. Two special activities are the retreats held twice a year, in the fall and spring semesters. The retreat usually takes place in a camp about 40 miles away from the parish. One priest from the parish is the spiritual director, but the volunteers who are also college-age students, play vital roles in the multiple activities of the retreat. They transport the participants and their belongings to the camp. They buy provisions, plan and cook the meals. They clean the places. They arrange for the sacramental celebration of Mass and Confession. They entertain the retreatants with social programs such as music and games. In brief, the volunteers stay with the participants all through the retreat and help them in several ways.

My observations indicate that these volunteers enjoy helping the retreat participants. When I interviewed some volunteers, one said, "I did the retreat last year and went through conversion experience. And I want to do something for others. So I volunteered this year to help the students who make the retreat." Most volunteers who work as helpers or retreat leaders were once retreat participants who have experienced some conversion experience in the retreat. Volunteers emerge each year from this youth group as a result of their personal spiritual experiences.

The difference in the activities of the youth specialists depends on what the pastors want them to do in their parishes. In one of our area parishes, the youth specialist is also in charge of Pax Christi, a Catholic peace and justice organization that primarily focuses on vital issues in the local as well as in the international community. In two of our survey parishes, responsibility for preparing teenagers for the Sacrament of Confirmation is assigned to the youth specialists. The dimension of Christian formation of the youth is said to justify placing this task within the area of youth specialists. They obtain the help of others such as the religious education and liturgy specialists to complete this particular task.

#### RCIA Specialist

RCIA denotes the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The process consists of four phases: inquiry, catechumenate, enlightenment, and mystagogia (mystery, a Greek term). The goal of the whole process is to assist the participants to conversion and to initiate them into the Catholic Church, a relatively



new approach in the Church. All four survey parishes have RCIA programs. In three parishes the lay specialists run the program and in one the priests are responsible. Of the three lay specialists, only one is directly involved in the RCIA; and the other two have integrated this program into their areas of specialization, religious education and liturgy. Like the others, the RCIA specialist's educational level and tasks differ from parish to parish. As mentioned earlier, there is only one full-time, directly involved lay specialist in the survey area. This specialist is a female, married with adult children. She is a full-time ophthalmologist and a full-time RCIA specialist. She has been a member of the parish for 25 years. She began parish work as a Eucharistic minister, then became a lector, and eventually, volunteered to sponsor a person in RCIA. In the absence of the then RCIA specialist, she managed the program, becoming deeply interested. Now she is the specialist in RCIA in the parish with a host of volunteers as sponsors and catechists. She has completed the ministry program courses and a special course on the role of RCIA directors. Near the end of the study she was attending summer courses in theology and church history at one of the Catholic universities.

The lay specialists' tasks in the RCIA process can be broken into four phases, all of which depend a great deal on the help of the volunteers who form a parish team to carry them out.

The first phase of the process is called Inquiry or pre-Catechumenate. The lay specialist welcomes the individuals who seek to know more about the Catholic beliefs

and practices. These individuals come from different backgrounds: some have never been baptized; some have no acquaintance with the Church; some are baptized into another denomination; some were baptized as infants but never had religious education. All these individuals are received with warm hospitality and given opportunities to ask their questions and tell their personal stories in informal settings. The lay specialist and the parish team coordinate the settings and invite the priest, some lay specialists, and some parishioners to come and share their personal experiences. The enquiry phase is said to last for months or even years depending on the individual's needs. Those enquirers who are ready to proceed to the next phase are helped to discern their readiness and are received officially in the assembly of the parishioners by a ritual called the Rite of Entrance to the Catechumenate. One of the priests performs the ritual during a Sunday Mass in the presence of the parish community.

In the second phase the enquirers are called the "catechumens," which denotes the transition from the state of enquiry to a state of experience as Christians, even though they are not full members of the Church. They join the parishioners at each Sunday Mass to listen to the Scripture readings and the homily. After the homily, they are formally dismissed from the assembly to study the Scriptures through group discussion and prayer. The lay specialist and the volunteers (called "catechists") help the catechumens to apply the Scriptural knowledge in their personal life. One important task of the lay specialist at this phase is to call for volunteers from the

parish to be sponsors to the catechumens, and to assign a volunteer to each catechumen. The RCIA seems to stress the importance of the role of sponsors as companions, guides, and models of Christian life to the catechumens. They are considered to be vital links between the catechumens and the parish community. They pray and share their personal faith stories with the catechumens and invite them to the parish social activities. The duration of this phase is again determined by the needs of the catechumens. Those who find themselves ready go on to the third phase called "Enlightenment."

The catechumens are next admitted into the third phase by the "Rite of Election." This phase is designed to take place within the forty days of the Lenten season and the ritual is performed by the diocesan bishop. On the first Sunday of Lent the catechumens from each parish gather in the Cathedral Church accompanied by the lay specialists, sponsors, and godparents. The bishop calls the catechumens by their names and officially invites them to enter the Church through the Easter sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist). From this moment on, those who are to be initiated are called the "elect." This phase, as it is known from its title, marks the period of spiritual purification and enlightenment. In order to express the penitential dimension of the season of Lent, the parish at this phase performs other rituals with the catechumens. The rituals, called "scrutinies," are celebrated in the Masses of the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. The rituals consist of prayers of healing offered in the name of the community, so that the elect will have the

strength to fight against evil and remain pure as they move toward the Sacraments of Initiation. The final preparation for Initiation is celebrated during the last three days of Holy Week, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. On Holy Thursday, the elect are reminded of their Christian service by special rituals such as the washing of the feet that re-enacts Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples. On Good Friday, the elect meditate with the parish community on the death and sufferings of Jesus, as the rituals call for conversion and purification experience. On Holy Saturday, the night of Easter Vigil, the elect are baptized, confirmed, and given the Eucharist in the assembly of the parishioners by the priests. Through these ritual celebrations the elect become fully initiated Catholics. However, they are given continued support by the parish community and this is marked by a fourth phase called "mystagogia."

Mystagogia lasts the fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. It is believed that in the early Church this was the period when the Christians explained the mystery (meaning) of the Sacraments that the catechumens had received. During the Sundays of Eastertime, the new Catholics share their experiences of conversion and faith with the parish community. The lay specialist, the parish team, the sponsors, and the parish community help and support the new Catholics through formal and informal social gatherings. They encourage the new Catholics to meet once a month for a year following Pentecost to support each other in their search for deeper faith and continued conversion experience. The role of the RCIA specialist is crucial for the completion of this process. Although the priests are involved in different phases, the

whole process of RCIA is planned, volunteers recruited, sponsors assigned, and the plans executed by the lay specialists.

In this chapter I have given ethnographic descriptions of the different specialized activities which the lay specialists carry out in the sample parishes. In the coming chapter I pass from causes to consequences, and try to learn, via quantitative data, whether these changes, these increases in the roles of the laity, have had any measurable impact on the religious lives of the respondents.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE LAY SPECIALISTS AND THE PARISHIONERS

The preceding chapters described the specialized activities of the lay specialists. Now the key question is as follows: Does the presence of these lay specialists exert any impact on the religious lives of parishioners? The purpose of this chapter is to present data that address this important question. On examination of the data, my answer to the question is: Yes, there is statistical evidence that the presence of lay specialists in the sample parishes does exert an impact on the religious lives of the parishioners.

My strategy for answering the question is described next. A simple measure of interactions with lay specialists was computed for each respondent. This was treated as the independent variable. Some respondents seek the services of the lay specialist for personal or religious problems, and others do not. I then examined, as the dependent variable, several aspects of the religious life of the respondents, such as intensity of involvement in parish programs, adherence to different religious beliefs and practices, and—"the bottom line"—level of financial contributions. My hypothesis was: those that interact with lay specialists in the parish will also have higher scores on these religious measures. They will be more involved in parish programs, they will

have stronger religious beliefs and more frequent involvement with traditional religious practices, and they will contribute more to the parish.

I was looking for associations between and among variables. The causal dynamics which underlie and produce these associations could be a matter for discussion and perhaps dispute. But my intent here was, first, to see if there were any associations about which to argue.

A theoretical framework underlies the choice of the dependent variables, but one which derives less from social science than from the ideology of Vatican II. There are two ideological points that were emphasized in the Second Vatican Council, applicable not only to the lay specialists in the parishes but to every parishioner: 1) the Mission of the Church belongs to every baptized person and 2) every baptized person is called to Christian spirituality (believer's response to God through everything). It is in the light of these two propositions that I identified the two domains that serve as the dependent variables: 1) the parishioners' involvement in the local church (parish) and 2) the parishioners' adherence to their Christian spirituality through their daily life (sociocultural and religious dimensions). The question of financial contributions could conceptually be considered part of parish involvement. But this is so important that I have given it separate treatment in the chapter. I tried to determine, through analysis of survey data, whether the presence of lay specialists impacts parishioners in these two areas of a) involvement in the parish and b) influence on their personal Christian spirituality.

Independent Variable: Interaction with Lay Specialists

The study comprised only four Catholic parishes. For statistical purposes, one cannot, therefore, use the parish as a unit of analysis. I used rather the individual respondent as the unit of analysis, and compared the 1,293 respondents in terms of whether they interacted with lay specialists or not.

Interaction with lay specialists was measured in that section of the questionnaire that dealt with human problems. These were discussed in Chapter 3, which presented an inventory of the familial, personal, and emotional problems reported by respondents. However, I also had respondents say for each problem reported, whether on that particular problem they sought the help of a lay specialist or a priest.

On the basis of these data, I computed two indices: the first, an index of lay specialist help, and the second, an index of priestly help. I created the priestly index for comparative purposes, to examine whether people on the whole went more to the lay specialists or the priests for their problems. Each index was created simply by tallying the number of problems on which the individual ever sought help from the lay specialist or the priest (depending on the index). Only 201 of the 1,293 respondents (16%) sought the help of a lay specialist at least once. (Of these, two out of three sought help more than once from a lay specialist.) In contrast, 344 respondents (27%) sought out the help of a priest at least once on one of the human problems.



TABLE 46  
Tendency to Seek Help from Lay Specialists, by Parish

Did person seek help from lay specialists?

Parish	Yes	No	Total
St. Thomas (%)	25 12.32	178 87.68	203
St. Justin (%)	37 9.41	356 90.59	393
St. Francis (%)	47 16.04	246 83.96	293
St. Benedict (%)	92 22.77	312 77.23	404
Total	201	1,092	1,293
Chi-Square $P < 0.001$			

Two things became clear from this simple tally. First, the vast majority of these Catholics never seek help from their parish on personal human problems. Second, when help is sought, there is still a greater traditionalist tendency to go to the priest rather than to the lay specialist. Nonetheless, the number of respondents who went either to priests or lay specialists was sufficiently high to permit statistical analysis of the possible impact of these interactions on their religious lives.

As could have been predicted, the four parishes differ substantially on the independent variable. As shown in Table 46, in all four parishes, those who seek help

TABLE 47  
Tendency to Seek Help from Priests, by Parish

Did person seek help of a priest?

Parish	Yes	No	Total
St. Thomas (%)	58 28.57	145 71.43	203
St. Justin (%)	80 20.36	313 79.64	393
St. Francis (%)	64 21.84	229 78.16	293
St. Benedict (%)	142 35.15	272 64.85	404
Total	344	949	1,293
Chi-Square $P < 0.001$			

from lay specialists are a minority. But in St. Benedict parish, the minority is substantially and significantly larger than in the other parishes. In St. Justin, the tendency is weakest.

For comparative purposes, I generated a similar table on the tendency to seek help from the priest. The breakdown by parish on this variable is given in Table 47. The results are quite similar to those of the preceding table. The parishioners are significantly more inclined to seek help from priests than lay specialists. Even in St. Benedict parish there are more people that seek help from a priest than from a lay

specialist. That is, the new does not drive out the old. The tendency to seek help from lay specialists does not diminish the tendency to seek out help from priests as well.

Do these tendencies vary by age? I suspected that the tendency to seek help from lay specialists would be stronger among the young. This hypothesis was partially borne out. Whereas some 18% of those under 35 years old sought the help of a lay person, only 9% of those over 55 years old did so, a statistically significant difference. (Contrary to our expectations, the middle age group, those from 35-54, were identical with the younger group.) I also examined for gender differences in this tendency to seek help from laity, but found none of significance: 14% of the males and 16% of the females sought such help, a difference too small to reach statistical significance. Similar age and gender patterns emerged with respect to the tendency to seek help from priests as well. Surprisingly, the older group, which was the minority in seeking help from the lay specialists, was also weakest in their tendency to seek help from priests as well.

To sum up: I used as my independent variable the question of whether the individual sought help from a lay specialist or not for human problems. I computed a measure of seeking priestly help as well for purposes of comparison and control, which is discussed below. I now turn to discussion of the dependent variables.

#### Domain I: Parishioners' Involvement in Parishes

In Catholic tradition the parish is the center of all spiritual and social activities. It serves as an anchor for individual and collective involvement. It is the "local

church” that represents the Universal Church. The mission of the Church is ultimately carried out through the local churches, the parishes. Therefore, the parishioners’ involvement in the mission of the Church, in practice, means that the parishioners engage in parish programs or activities in the parishes. In this study, the term “programs” refers to events that are directed principally by the lay specialists, and “activities” refers to those that are led principally by lay volunteers.

To determine the degree of the parishioners’ involvement, I listed on the questionnaire 14 items that include the parish programs such as sponsor couple, youth group leader, Eucharistic minister, and lector that are under the directions of the lay specialists. I asked the respondents to indicate whether they are involved in any of the 14 items by the following questions: 1) I currently perform that role, 2) I have done it in the past but not now, and 3) I have never performed that role. For analytical purposes, I have collapsed the responses into three degrees of involvement: “None,” “Light,” and “Heavy.”

As shown in Table 48, using this breakdown 354 respondents (28%) scored heavy on parish involvement, 415 (32%) scored light, and 514 (40%) were not involved. (This percentage of non-involvement may be skewed because I limited the parish programs to those that are under the directions of the lay specialists. Several other activities such as Pax Christi and Golden Girls that are led by volunteers were not included in the survey.)

TABLE 48  
Distribution of Laity's Involvement in Parish

Parish	None	Light	Heavy	Total
St. Thomas (%)	90 44.33	62 30.54	51 25.12	203
St. Justin (%)	169 43.00	128 32.57	96 24.43	393
St. Francis (%)	119 40.61	97 33.11	77 26.28	293
St. Benedict (%)	136 33.66	128 31.68	140 34.65	404
Total	514	415	364	1293
Chi-Square 15.2, $P < 0.001$				

I looked at these figures in Table 48 by parish. St. Thomas, St. Justin, and St. Francis have equal percentages of parishioners' involvement: about 42% not involved, about 31% lightly involved, and about 25% heavily involved. In St. Benedict, which has the highest number of lay specialists, the distribution differs: one in three is heavily involved, one in three is lightly involved, and one in three is not involved.

In other words, two out of three in St. Benedict are involved in parish programs. That is, the "transformed" parish with the heaviest involvement of lay specialists is also the one in which the parishioners themselves are most actively involved in parish activities. Table 48 is consistent with the assertion that the presence

of lay specialists leads to heavier parish involvement on the part of the parish community.

In terms of positing causal processes, however, I could not claim a great impact from the presence of lay specialists unless I also explored the operation of other factors associated with heavier or lighter involvement in parish activities. One possibility was the variable of gender. Is there gender bias in the degree of involvement? The conventional wisdom states that women will be more involved than men in religion. Table 49 presents gender and the degree of involvement.

Table 49 defies conventional wisdom. Statistically, the significant tendency is for males to be more involved in the parishes than females. Of the 520 male respondents, 63% are either lightly or heavily involved in their parishes. Among the female respondents, 59% are involved in their parishes either lightly or heavily. And

TABLE 49  
Distribution of Laity's Involvement, by Gender

Gender	None	Light	Heavy	Total
Male (%)	193 37.12	154 29.62	173 33.27	520
Female (%)	313 41.08	259 33.99	190 24.93	762
Total	506	413	363	1,282
Chi-Square 10.6, $P < 0.001$				

among those who are heavily involved, there are a higher percentage of males than females. In the context of the preponderance of women attending church services, these data on the preponderance of men involved in their parishes seem innovative. Family duties may be the reason why women are less involved in programs than men. Of those who indicated problems with children in the survey, 47.34% were women, as compared to 40.46% men. More women are involved in raising and educating their children. That seems to leave very little time for women who have young children to get involved heavily in their parishes. At any rate there is at least a slight, statistically significant tendency for men to be more actively involved in public parish activities than women.

Another variable on which we could predict difference is that of age. Is involvement equally distributed among the different age groups?

There is no statistical significance in Table 50, that is, no significant difference in terms of involvement among the age groups. This could be explained by the fact that there are different categories of programs for diverse age groups. For example, those who are 55 and above are most likely to choose programs such as sponsor couple, prayer couple, and parish committees. Those who are 35-54 are most likely to be involved in the educational programs such as RCIA sponsor, retreat team member, and education committee members. Those who are 18-34 are involved in programs such as youth group leader and catechist. The programs for adults, such as

TABLE 50  
Distribution of Involvement, by Age Groups

Age Group	None	Light	Heavy	Total
18-34 (%)	142 38.59	125 33.97	101 27.45	368
35-54 (%)	199 38.79	169 32.94	145 28.27	513
55+ (%)	162 42.0	111 28.8	113 29.2	386
Total	503	405	359	1,267

Eucharistic minister, altar server, choir member, and usher in the parishes that are open to all the age groups.

In summary, the majority of our survey population is involved in the parish. Among the four survey parishes, involvement is greatest in St. Benedict, where 65.2% of the essential tasks are performed by lay specialists. In all parishes, more males than females are involved in the parish. And the percentage of males heavily involved is significantly higher than the females. There was no significant difference among age groups. Each age group represents a more or less equal percentage of involvement.

#### Testing the Domain I Hypothesis

My goal was to see if higher scores on parish involvement are in any way related to their scores on involvement with lay specialists. The null hypothesis was that there will be no relationship. My hypothesis was that the stronger the presence



of lay specialists, either in the parish as a whole or in the personal life of the parishioners, the stronger will be the involvement of the parishioners in parishes. Table 51 shows that among those who seek help from lay specialists the percentage of those heavily involved in the parish is double that of those who do not seek such help. People get involved in the parish for various reasons. In their preliminary interviews, they gave various reasons. Parish involvement makes them feel good. Involvement by parents is a good example for their children. One Eucharistic minister said, "When I distribute Communion to the people and my children watch me doing it, I am giving good example to them. I hope one day they also will do like me." Some get involved in the parish to do something for their parish community. Others get involved because the priests from the pulpit constantly tell them to do so.

Table 51 gives statistical support to the hypothesis. There is a significant relationship between the tendency a person has to seek help from lay specialists on

TABLE 51  
Seek Lay Specialists' Help and Parish Involvement

Seek Help	None	Light	Heavy	Total
Yes	48	59	94	201
(%)	23.88	29.35	46.77	
No	466	356	270	1,092
(%)	42.67	32.60	24.73	
Total	514	415	364	1,293
Chi-Square 44.9, $P < 0.001$				

human problems and the degree of that person's involvement in other aspects of parish programs.

It was not my purpose here, however, to identify such intentions. My purpose was only to examine if there would be any relationship between those who seek lay specialists' help and their parish involvement. I found a significant relationship between those who seek help and those who do not.

There was a potential analytic problem, however. Perhaps those who go to the laity for help also go to priests for help. How could I ascertain whether the involvement with lay specialists has any effect on parish involvement independent of the effect of simultaneous involvement with priests? For comparison, I wanted to test if there would be any difference between those who seek lay specialists' help and the priests' help in terms of their parish involvement. Table 52 presents the distribution of seeking the priests' help and parish involvement. We note first that whereas 47% of those who sought help from laity are heavily involved, only 39% of those who sought help from priests are heavily involved. Both types of help seeking are associated with heavier parish involvement, but the lay specialists' help more so. A similar pattern emerges on the category of no involvement in the parish. Of those who indicate seeking help from the priests, 31.40% do not get involved in the parish as opposed to 24% of those not involved and seeking help from the lay specialists. This is to say, that those who go to priests for help tend to get less involved in the

TABLE 52  
Seeking Priests' Help and Laity's Parish Involvement

Seek Help	None	Light	Heavy	Total
Yes (%)	108 31.40	102 29.65	135 38.95	344
No (%)	406 42.78	313 32.98	230 24.24	949
Total	514	415	364	1,293
Chi-Square 28.5, $P < 0.001$				

parish than those who go for help to the lay specialists. The data are consistent with our hypotheses concerning the association between parish participation and involvement with lay specialists.

But to further eliminate the possible effect of interaction with priests, I subdivided the sample into four groups: 1) Those who sought help from both priests and lay specialists, 2) Those who sought help only from the lay specialists, 3) Those who sought help from only from the priests, and 4) Those who sought no help from either. Table 53 presents the distribution results of the above categories tabulated by strength of parish involvement.

Table 53 indicates in the first place that there is a strong association between seeking help from the parish and degree of parish involvement. In the degree of parish involvement, there is a difference of 26% between those who sought help (81%) from

TABLE 53  
Seek Any Help and Parish Involvement

Seek Help	None	Light	Heavy	Total
Both (%)	14 18.92	21 28.38	39 52.70	74
Only Lay Specialists (%)	34 26.77	38 29.92	55 43.31	127
Only Priests (%)	94 34.81	81 30.00	95 35.19	270
Neither (%)	372 45.26	275 33.45	175 21.29	822
Total	514	415	364	1,293
Chi-Square 67.4, $P < 0.001$				

both (priests and lay specialists) and those who sought help (55%) from neither. On the opposite side, the percentage of those who tend not to get involved in the parish is less among those who seek help (18.92%) than those who do not seek help (45.26%) from the parish. This is to say, that the more parishioners seek help from the parish, the more they tend to get involved in the parish.

But Table 53 also shows something very important for my hypothesis. Looking only at two subgroups--those who sought only priests for help and those who sought only lay specialists for help--the latter are more heavily involved than the former. In

short, the hypothesis on the positive impact of lay specialists on the level of involvement in parish activities was supported by the data.

### Domain II: Parishioners' Christian Spirituality

I now turn to the second domain of dependent variables: the personal religious lives of the respondents: their personal beliefs and their public and private religious practices. I discussed in Chapter 4 the religious beliefs of our sample population in terms of 1) core Catholic beliefs with regard to the spirit world, 2) ethical and moral dimension, and 3) traditional Church practices. In Domain II, I explore whether there is any indication of possible influence in their beliefs and practices because of the interactions the parishioners have with the lay specialists on human problems. For comparative depth, I also indicate the priests' influence in the matters of parishioners' beliefs and practices because of the interactions they have with the parishioners on human problems.

In my analysis, I distinguish between a traditionalist orientation toward beliefs, which accepts the official teachings of the Catholic Church, and an orientation that questions or rejects these traditions, which for want of a better nonjudgmental term, I call "mainstream" in recognition that such rejection corresponds to the dominant ideologies found in the surrounding environment, whether among people of other religions or people of no religion. My use of the terms "traditionalist" or "mainstream" is not meant to be either critical or laudatory of either group. The terms

simply indicate that a person's orientation on beliefs and practices is related to that person's interactions with lay specialists.

I examine if there are any statistically significant differences in the beliefs and practices of the survey population because of the interactions with the lay specialists. My hypothesis is that the greater the interaction with lay specialists, the stronger would be adherence to traditional Catholic beliefs and practices.

Religious beliefs were examined under three categories: 1) core beliefs, 2) ethical and moral beliefs, and 3) traditional practice beliefs. Likewise, the religious practices were examined under three categories: 1) core Catholic practices, 2) Catholic Sacramental practices, and 3) general Christian practices.

### Core Beliefs

There are five items in the core beliefs: 1) the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, 2) the virginal conception of Jesus, 3) the bodily resurrection of Jesus, 4) life after death, and 5) the eternity of Hell. As I indicated in Chapter 4, there was internal variety in the population on adherence to these beliefs. My hypothesis was that greater interaction with the lay specialists would be correlated with greater adherence to traditional belief.

The hypothesis was not borne out. With respect to the first four core beliefs, I found no significant correlation between them and the degree of interaction with the lay specialists (or priests) in the parish. As for the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, one out of three respondents disagreed with the teachings of the Church,

preferring a formulation that reduced the presence to a symbolic presence. But there was no relationship between this and involvement with lay specialists. With respect to Jesus's virginal conception, nine out of ten respondents accepted the traditional position on the matter, as did more than eight out of ten respondents with respect to beliefs in his bodily resurrection of Jesus. There was no impact on this belief by lay specialist interactions.

With respect to one's personal destiny after death, nine out of ten respondents believed in the immortality of the soul after death, fully accepting traditional belief in that regard. Where a discrepancy appeared was in the question of the eternity of Hell, a central tenet of traditional Catholic doctrine. Here nearly half (47%) of the respondents disagreed with traditional Catholic position on the matter. God is too kind, in their view, to send people to an eternal Hell. And this divergence from traditional teaching is significantly higher among those who have interacted only with lay specialists and not interacted with priests than among those who have or have not interacted with priests. It should be recalled that those who deny an eternal Hell for the most part believe in an eternal soul, which implies a belief in guaranteed Heaven (the alternative to Hell).

#### Ethical and Moral Beliefs

I listed six items in this category: a) premarital sex, b) extramarital sex, c) divorce/annulment, d) contraceptives, e) homosexuality, and f) abortion. On the issue of the sinfulness of premarital sex, 40% of the sample disagreed with the Church's

position, stating instead that there are circumstances in which premarital sex is acceptable. But of those who sought only lay specialists for help, nearly 50% disagreed with the Church's teaching, whereas only 38% of those who sought only priests for help disagreed with the Church's position. In terms of extramarital sex by married people 98% of the population agreed with the Church teaching on that matter. On the matter of divorce, fully 70% of the sample population disagreed with traditional Church teaching on the matter, a stance independent of their involvement with lay specialists. And on the issue of contraceptives, 82% disagreed with the Church's teaching on the matter. In this matter there is a significant correlation: the more one interacts with lay specialists, the more likely is one to accept contraceptives. On the issue of homosexuality, on which 30% disagree with the Church's position, the highest percentage of acceptance of homosexuality is found among those who interact with lay specialists, though the differences are too small to reach statistical significance. On the abortion issue, 21% of the respondents disagree with Church prohibitions. But whereas 25% of those who interact only with lay specialists view abortion as a woman's right, only 14% of those who interact with priests hold this view. In short, in these controversial ethical issues respondents' interaction with lay specialists rather than with priests is correlated with a higher level of departure from Church teaching and higher level of acceptance of the mainstream positions found in the surrounding environment.



### Traditional Disciplinary Beliefs

There is one final category which I examined: two items concerning the traditional practice of the Church: a) priestly celibacy and b) male priesthood. On the subject of priestly celibacy, 58% of the respondents believe that the Church should allow married priests. As is consistent with patterns discussed above, those interacting exclusively with lay specialists are more heavily skewed to the mainstream position against traditional Church discipline on this matter (66%), though the difference is not statistically significant. On the subject of male priesthood, 51% of the sample population want the Church to admit women to the priesthood, a stance shared equally whether one interacted with lay specialists or priests.

To sum up: On matters of religious belief there are strongly consistent associations, several of them statistically significant but all pointing in the same direction, between interaction with lay specialists and departure from traditional Church teaching. This was contrary to my original expectation. Whether it is the lay specialist generating these beliefs, or whether people who already have non-traditional beliefs seek the lay specialist, is a matter for separate discussion. In this section I merely wished to document the associations.

Unlike the core beliefs and the ethical and moral beliefs, the survey population differs from the national trend in the traditional practice beliefs in the Catholic Church. In the national survey, 70% of the population favored retaining priestly celibacy, whereas in my survey only 42% agreed on retaining priestly celibacy. A

majority, 58% favored allowing priests to marry. On the issue of priesthood, the sample population seems equally divided: one-half of the respondents favored the traditional male priesthood and the other half indicated that women should be admitted to the priesthood. In the national survey, about 58% favored women's ordination and about 34% favored the traditional male priesthood. The age of "disagreement" concerning the traditional practices of retaining priestly celibacy and the male priesthood in the survey population tends to be higher than the national trends.

I now turn to a discussion of practice. I examine the religious practices under three categories: 1) the core Catholic practices, 2) the Catholic sacramental practices, and 3) the general Christian practices.

### The Core Catholic Practices

Mass, Communion, and Confession are examined in the core practices. There was no relationship between weekly Mass and Communion on the one hand and interaction with either the lay specialists or the priests on the other. However, a significant difference was noted in the practice of Confession. Of those who interacted with the lay specialists, 43% indicated the use of Confession less than once a year and 57% at least once a year. By comparison, the percentages indicated by those who interacted with the priests are higher: 33% less than a year and 67% at least once a year ( $P < 0.001$ ). The higher percentages of the practices of Confession among those who interact with the priests may indicate the opportunity available to them

when they choose to go to the priests for any spiritual help. But this pattern of declining use of Confession associated with use of lay specialists is consistent with similar patterns found in the beliefs.

### The Catholic Sacramental Practices

The statistical differences are examined here in the following practices referred to traditionally as sacramentals (as distinct from the official Sacraments of the Church): Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Novena, Fasting, Abstinence from meat, Liturgy of the Hours, and Spiritual Retreat. I found a strong association between those who interacted and those who did not interact either with the lay specialists or priests in the sacramental practices. Attachment to these sacramentals is higher among those who interact more with lay specialists. For example, in the practice of praying the Rosary at least once a month, the percentage of those who interacted with the lay specialists is 38.38% as opposed to 28.07% of those who did not interact with the lay specialists. This 10% difference is statistically significant. Likewise, in the practice of the Stations of the Cross at least once a year, the percentage of those who interacted with the priests is 51.51% as opposed to 42.67% of those who did not interact with the priests. The more parishioners seek help from the pastoral staff (lay specialists or priests), the more they tend to practice. This trend is seen in all Sacramental practices.

I found differences in all Sacramental practices, except the Novena and the Liturgy of the Hours, in terms of interactions with either lay specialists or priests

TABLE 54  
The Percentages of Parishioners' Sacramental Practices and Interaction

Practice	Lay Specialists	Priests
At least once a year:		
Benediction	48.69	42.90
Stations of the Cross	57.58	51.51
Novena	24.49	26.49
Fasting	70.35	67.37
Abstinence	87.44	86.61
Retreat	41.62	31.40
At least once a month:		
Rosary	38.38	35.52
Liturgy of the Hours	0.09	12.00

Table 54 presents the percentage of sample parishioners involved in Sacramental practices and interacted with the lay specialists or the priests. The differences in some practices are more significant than in others. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, retreat, and Liturgy of the Hours indicate greater percentages of difference in terms of parishioners' interactions. Three out of four denote interacting more with the lay specialists than the priests. The differences in the other practices such as Novena, fasting, abstinence, and Rosary are not significant.

#### General Christian Practices

The objects of statistical study under this category are practices common not only to Catholics but also to members of other Christian denominations: Grace at

meals, Bible reading, other spiritual reading, charismatic prayer meetings, centering prayer, and personal reflection of God. As in the items of sacramental practices, I found significant differences in the percentages between those who interacted and those who did not interact with the pastoral staff. For example, of those who interacted with the lay specialists, 60% did Bible reading at least once a month as opposed to 33% who did not seek help from the lay specialists. That is, the more you go to the lay specialist, the higher the likelihood that you will read the Bible regularly. The causal relationship can be disputed, but the association is present.

In general my data reveal associations between adherence to general Christian practices and the tendency to interact with the lay specialists. Table 55 presents the differences. There is no difference between those who interact with the lay specialists

TABLE 55  
Percentages of Parishioners' Christian Practices and Interactions

Practice	Lay specialists	Priests
At least once a day		
Grace at meals	48.74	46.71
Personal Reflection	56.85	56.46
At least once a month		
Bible reading	60.41	51.20
Other spiritual reading	61.73	51.35
Charismatic Prayer	26.20	15.40
At least once a year		
Centering Prayer	52.31	47.53

and those who interact with the priests in their daily Christian practices such as Grace at meals and personal reflection of God. However, we found significant differences in the monthly and yearly Christian practices. Those who interacted with the lay specialists demonstrated greater involvements in Bible reading, other spiritual reading, charismatic prayer, and centering prayer than those who interacted with the priests. These are fairly new practices for Catholics; they have become more frequent since Vatican II.

To sum up, the frequency of Confession in the core Catholic practices seems higher among those who interact with the priests rather than the lay specialists. The frequency of Mass and Communion is the same whether the interaction was with the lay specialists or the priests. In sacramental practices, there is a strong association between higher frequency of sacramental practices and interactions with the pastoral staff. And those who interacted with the lay specialists demonstrated greater frequency in general Christian practices. If I had to sum up the impact of lay specialists on matters of Catholic religious life, the following summary would be compatible with the findings: They increase general participation in parish programs (the "parish involvement" variables discussed earlier), they have a modest impact on sacramental and liturgical practice (in the association with more infrequent Confessions but more frequent adherence to practices such as Bible readings) and they have a substantial impact on belief systems, in the direction of disagreement with the Church's teaching.

### Lay Specialists and Parishioner's Financial Contribution

What impact do lay specialists have on the financial "bottom line," the amount of money which the respondents contribute to their parishes? Catholic parishes are totally maintained by the voluntary financial contributions of the parishioners. Sunday Mass collection is the most popular method of obtaining money for the parish in the United States. A few collection baskets or boxes are passed around the pews to those attending Mass to make their voluntary contributions. It is usually done at a time between the homily and the offertory by the ushers who collect the baskets and send the money in one basket along with the bread and wine through some gift-bearers to the altar. The priest, standing at the foot of the altar receives the gifts: bread, wine and money. It has a symbolic meaning, that the gifts are participants' contribution to God in return for the many gifts they have received from God. Bread and wine are consecrated in the Mass and made available for the participants as their spiritual food, and money is used for the operation of the parish.

Parishioners contribute to their parishes for various reasons. In my preliminary interviews, I asked them to state some of the reasons for giving financial contributions to the parishes. The following are most commonly given reasons: "My income has been good," "I am satisfied with the services of the parish," and "I am religiously committed to my parish." I wanted to test if there would be any association between parish financial contribution and lay specialists' services in the parishes. Priests' services are used for comparative purposes. The procedure to test such an association

TABLE 56  
Respondents' Mean Weekly Contribution

Parish	N Obs	Mean
St. Thomas	203	\$24
St. Benedict	404	\$16
St. Justin	393	\$20
St. Francis	293	\$24

had a number of steps. I established the mean weekly contributions in the four sample parishes. I assumed that the weekly contributions would reflect the income status of the respondents in each parish. Then, I examined the mean weekly contributions of those who sought the services of the lay specialists or the priest. This indicated the difference, if any, between those who seek help and those who do not seek help. I established the mean weekly income of the respondents and the help they seek from lay specialists or priests. The purpose of this analysis was to indicate which income category of respondents seek the services of the lay specialists. Table 56 represents the mean weekly contributions in the survey parishes.

The table shows that three of the four parishes have more or less similar mean weekly contributions in their parishes. The lowest mean weekly income in St. Benedict may be because of the student population in the parish. It was confirmed by



TABLE 57  
Distribution of Mean Weekly Contribution, by Type of Help Sought

Type of Help	N	Weekly Contribution
Only lay specialists	109	\$27
Only Priests	244	\$18
Sought Both	69	\$25
Sought Neither	772	\$25

checking the employment status of the respondents in each parish. The results indicated that in each parish, about half of the respondents were employed full time. But St. Benedict had the highest percentage of unemployed (28.86%). In comparison, St. Thomas had 13%, St. Justin had 17%, and St. Francis had 16% unemployed. Among the unemployed in St. Benedict, about 75% were which may explain the reason for St. Benedict having the lowest mean weekly income.

After establishing the mean weekly contributions in our survey parishes, I tested to see if there would be a significant difference in the weekly contributions between those who seek lay specialists' services and those who do not seek lay specialists services. I tested the priests' services as a tool to compare lay specialists' services and weekly contributions. Table 57 presents the mean weekly contributions of those who have sought the help of the lay specialists and priests.

The table suggests that those who go to lay specialists are more generous in their giving or simply more wealthy. There is a highly significant difference between

those who seek services from the lay specialists and those who do not seek services from the lay specialists in terms of their financial contributions. Those who seek services from the lay specialists give significantly more than those who do not seek services from them.

Interestingly, findings indicate that those who seek the priests' services make smaller financial contributions than those who do not seek services from the priests. However, in order to avoid any misinterpretation of the data on lay specialists' services and contributions, I hypothesized that wealthier people seek services from the lay specialists. To test this hypothesis, first I employed four progressively more affluent income categories and indicated the percentages of those seeking lay specialists' services and priests' services. Then I placed the mean weekly contributions of the respondents under each category of income in terms of seeking services from the parish specialists. Table 58 presents the percentages of the income categories seeking lay specialists' services.

Table 58 indicates a surprising significant tendency for the extreme groups to seek the services of the lay specialists: those with income of less than \$25K, and those with income of \$75K or more. Of the other two categories in between, the difference is not very significant. For comparative purposes, I asked if the same trend would occur among those who seek the priests' services.

TABLE 58  
Income Categories and Seeking Lay Specialists' Services

Income	Yes	No	Total
Less than \$25K (%)	77 19.64	315 80.36	392
\$25K to 49K (%)	43 11.23	340 88.77	383
\$50K to 74K (%)	39 14.89	223 85.11	262
\$75K or more (%)	38 17.35	181 82.65	219
Total	197	1059	1256
P<0.01			

Table 59 indicates that the trend in seeking the priests' services is different from the trend to seek help from lay specialists. There is a significant tendency for those who seek the priests' services to be in the lowest income bracket. Those whose income is less than \$25K seek the help of the priest is about 10% more than those with an income of \$75K or more.

Next I then examined the weekly contribution of these income categories in terms of the services they sought from the parish specialists. Table 60 presents the distribution of mean weekly contribution of the income bracket less than \$25K.

Table 60, which includes only respondents who earn less than \$25,000 per year, indicates that those who seek services from the lay specialists contribute slightly

TABLE 59  
Income Categories and Seeking Priests' Services

Income	Yes	No	Total
Less than \$25K (%)	125 31.89	267 68.11	392
\$25K to \$49K (%)	103 26.89	280 73.11	383
\$50K to \$74K (%)	65 24.81	197 75.19	262
\$75K or more (%)	48 21.92	171 78.08	219
Total	341	915	1,256
P<0.01			

less than those who do not seek lay specialists' services, but the difference is not significant. This means, statistically, both groups (those who seek and those who do not seek services from the lay specialists' services) contribute equally. That means that the services of the lay specialists increased weekly contributions only in the other

TABLE 60  
Mean Weekly Contribution of the Less than \$25K Who Sought Help

Specialist	Help	N Obs	Mean
Lay	Yes	81	\$6
	No	348	\$7
Priest	Yes	128	\$6
	No	301	\$7

income brackets. I tested this hypothesis. It is important to note that those who sought the services of the priest within the income less than \$25K contribute the same amount as those who sought the services of the lay specialists. Among the least affluent, the difference in contribution between those who seek the priests' services and those who do not seek the priests' services is not significant.

Statistical analysis of the income brackets of \$25K to \$49K and \$50K to \$74K did not indicate significant differences in contributions either between those who sought lay specialists' services and those who did not seek them, or between those who sought priests' services and those who did not seek them. However, I found a very significant difference in contribution among the most affluent. Table 61 presents the mean contribution of the very wealthy who sought services from the parish specialists.

Table 61 demonstrates that controlling for income increases the importance of lay specialists' services in predicting contributions. The most affluent who seek out

TABLE 61  
Mean Weekly Contribution of the Most Affluent Who Sought Help

Specialist	Help	N Obs	Mean
Lay	Yes	38	\$83
	No	181	\$45
Priest	Yes	48	\$58
	No	171	\$49

services from the lay specialists contribute nearly twice as much (\$83 per week) as those who do not seek out lay specialists' services (\$45 per week). In seeking the services of the priests, the weekly contribution is slightly more among those who seek services than who do not, but the difference is not significant.

To sum up, from the analysis of the lay specialists and respondents' financial contributions to the parishes, I concluded that the services of the lay specialists could be used to predict parish contributions. Those who seek their services tend to contribute more than those who do not. Their services are significantly sought by those with income less than \$25K as well as those with income of \$75K or more. The most affluent who seek help from the lay specialists contribute nearly twice as much as those who do not seek services from the lay specialists. The influence of lay specialists' services in parish contributions brings up another question: Do lay specialists exert any other influence in the Christian life of the parishioners? I explore this in the following section.

### Lay Specialists as "Examples" for the Parishioners

The lay specialists are a subculture of the laity. They share a life of experience, like any other parishioners, in family, politics and community. And they share, by their "baptismal vocation," in the mission of the Church and Christian spirituality. However, their specialization in some traditions of the Catholic Church, recognition by the pastor and parishioners, and remuneration for their services in the parish distinguish them as a subculture. Unlike the parishioners, the lay specialists' social-

setting for their mission of the Church is the very parish where they are employed. In this setting, the lay specialists by performing their assigned tasks, not only affirm their status in the parish as "specialists" but also participate in the mission of the Church locally in the parish. In the process of their work experience such as feeling stress, anxiety, and pain, they respond to parishioners needs; and by responding to parishioners' needs, they respond to the Church's call to share in Christian spirituality. In this context, it was my assumption that the lay specialists who work in the parish are examples for the parishioners who are encouraged to seek a greater involvement in the mission of the Church, that is, locally in the parish, and to seek a link between their daily life experiences and faith traditions (religious beliefs and practices).

I received responses on the survey to test my assumption. The respondents were given the statement that "Lay specialists in our parish demonstrate in a formal way what all baptized persons are called to do by the Church, by virtue of their Baptism," and asked to choose one of the following: 1) I am very convinced, 2) I am somewhat convinced, 3) I am not convinced, and 4) I don't know. I then examined their responses in relation to the variables: parish, gender, age groups, marital status, education, and Catholic education.

Respondents were given the following statement and some possible options to choose: The need to make connection between my life experience and faith tradition is: 1) very strong in my life; 2) strong in my life; 3) moderate in my life; 4) weak in

my life; and 5) absent in my life. Since the responses to the last two options were insignificant, the total responses for the analysis were collapsed into the first three options for tabular purposes. I examined the responses by the variables: parish, gender, and age group. I also determined if there were any significant differences in the responses because of the intermediating agents: lay specialists or priests or both. The analysis follows.

When the responses were analyzed by parishes, there was a highly significant tendency ( $P < 0.001$ ) for parishes to differ in their response to the statement about lay specialists as models. Collapsing the "very convinced" and "somewhat convinced" I found that 69% of the respondents from St. Benedict stated their conviction that the lay specialists are examples for their life. St. Thomas, at the other end, had indicated the lowest percentage (45%) of conviction. The other two parishes had equal percentages (St. Justin: 56% and St. Francis: 54%) of conviction about the lay specialists. One might attribute the significant difference between St. Benedict and St. Thomas to the function of age in these parishes. Therefore, controlling for age, I found that in all parishes there appears to be a tendency for the post-Vatican II generation (18-34 years) to have a smaller percentage of persons "very convinced" about the lay specialists as examples. In the category of "somewhat convinced," I found significant difference between these two generations: in the pre-Vatican II generation, it was 25.35% and in the post-Vatican II generation, it was 38.42%.



Analyzing the responses for gender, there was a general absence of correlation between gender and response to the statement that the lay specialists are examples in the parishes. Marital status in general had very little relationship with lay specialists as examples. The "separated" and the "divorced" seem to indicate more conviction about the lay specialists as examples than the never-married, married, and widowed.

Educational status showed better correlation with the responses than did marital status. There is a significant difference in the "very convinced" between those who have a doctorate and those whose education stopped at or before high school. One out of three of those at the doctoral level indicated "very convinced" about the lay specialists' example, whereas, only one out of five of those at the high school level indicated "very convinced." Education seems to have a strong influence on one's conviction about lay specialists as examples in the parishes. However, there was a difference with the level of Catholic education. Table 62 presents the number of people and their mean Catholic educational level in terms of their attitude towards the conviction.

TABLE 62  
Catholic Educational Level and State of "Conviction"

Categories	N Obs	Mean
Do Not Know	396	4.9
Very Convinced	344	5.8
Somewhat Convinced	373	5.9
Not Convinced	120	6.5

The levels of Catholic education of the “very convinced” and “somewhat convinced” are about the same. The 120 respondents who said “not convinced” have the highest level of Catholic education. In other words, those who are convinced that the lay specialists are examples in the parishes have less Catholic education than those who are not convinced. Unlike the influence of “education,” Catholic education has not much influence on one’s attitude towards the conviction that lay specialists are examples for the parishioners.

I now examine the second part of the assumption, namely the need to make connection between one’s life experience and faith traditions, and the influence of the lay specialists. Table 63 presents the distribution of percentages in each parish in terms of the need to make connection between life experiences and faith traditions.

TABLE 63  
Percentages: In Need to Make Connection between  
Life and Faith, by Parish

Parish	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Total
St. Thomas (%)	61 31.94	65 34.03	65 43.03	191
St. Benedict (%)	140 35.62	136 34.61	117 29.77	393
St. Justin (%)	128 34.13	132 35.20	115 30.67	375
St. Francis (%)	80 28.88	90 32.49	107 38.63	277
Total	409	423	404	1,236

The data in Table 63 are grouped into three levels: very strong, strong, and moderate need to make connection between one's life experience and faith traditions. There were five categories on the questionnaire, but they have been collapsed into the above three levels for tabular purposes.

In general, parishes do not differ in the need to make connection between life and faith. At each level there is an almost equal percentage of respondents who express their need to experience God through connecting faith to their life experiences. Are there differences by gender? Table 64 presents the distribution in percentages of males and females who need to make connection between life and faith traditions.

There is significant difference between male and female respondents who feel the need to make connection between life and faith. In the category of "very strong,"

TABLE 64  
Percentages: In Need to Make Connection  
between Life and Faith, by Gender

Gender	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Total
Male (%)	138 27.38	168 33.33	198 39.29	505
Female (%)	270 37.19	252 34.71	204 28.10	726
Total	408	420	403	1,230
Chi-Square 20.1, P<0.001				

10% more females than males feel the need to make connection. In the “moderate” category there is an opposite trend, where 10% of more males than females feel the need to make connection. In the “strong” category equal percentages of females and males feel the need. When three categories of responses under gender are added up, females (59%) indicate a stronger tendency than males (41%) to connect life and faith.

The question next asked was is there any trend in this need to make connection between life and faith among any particular age group. Table 65 presents the distribution of percentages in age groups. As can be seen, age groups present different need profiles. In the category of “very strong” the post-Vatican II generation manifests the lowest percentage of need to link life and faith. At the other end, the

TABLE 65  
Percentages: In Need to Make Connection  
between Life and Faith, by Age Groups

Age Group	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Total
18-34 (%)	100 27.32	145 39.62	121 33.06	366
35-54 (%)	174 34.87	169 33.87	156 31.26	499
55+ (%)	124 35.73	105 30.26	118 34.01	347
Total	398	419	395	1,212
Chi-Square 10.0, P<0.01				

TABLE 66  
Percentages: Need to Make Connection  
between Life and Faith, by Help Sought

Rel. Agents	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Total
Both (%)	35 49.30	24 33.80	12 16.90	71
Lay Specialist (%)	52 42.28	52 42.28	19 15.45	123
Priest (%)	109 41.60	82 31.30	71 27.10	262
Neither (%)	213 27.31	265 33.97	302 38.72	780
P<0.001				

pre-Vatican generation shows the highest percentage of the “very strong” need to make connection between life and faith. There are equal percentages of middle age generation in each category. However, they make up the majority (41%) of the total respondents who feel the need to make connection between life and faith.

I next examine the influence of the intermediating agents such as the lay specialists or priest or both in the respondent’s need to make a link between life and faith. Table 66 presents the distribution of the connection between life and faith in terms of the help sought either from the lay specialists or priests or both.

Table 66 indicates a highly significant difference in the percentages between those who seek help from lay specialists and priests in their need to make a link

between life and faith and those who do not seek help in the need to make a link. Among those who seek lay specialists and priests, about 50% indicated a “very strong” need to make connection between life and faith. Only 17% indicated a moderate or weak need to make a link.

In contrast, of those who did not get any help from the lay specialists and priests, only 27% indicated a “very strong” need to make a link, and 39% indicated a moderate or weak need to make a link between life and faith. The percentages of those who approached only a lay specialist or only a priest with a “very strong” need to make a link between life and faith are the same. This seems to suggest that the influence of lay specialists is as strong as that of the priests in the need to make connection between life experiences and faith traditions.

To sum up, the assumption that the lay specialists by their employment in the Catholic parishes are examples for the parishioners encouraging them 1) to seek a greater involvement in the parish and 2) to seek a connection between life and faith was examined. The first part of the assumption was supported in general, by nearly half of the respondents in each sample parish. The pre-Vatican II generation seems to be very strong in their conviction that the lay specialists are examples in the parish. Education exerts an important influence on one’s conviction about lay specialists’ examples. Those who are highly educated think of lay specialists’ as examples more than the less educated. For those with Catholic education, there was a reverse trend. Those who think lay specialists are examples in the parish seem to have less Catholic

education than those who do not see lay specialists as examples. The second part of the assumption, namely to seek a connection between life and faith traditions, was supported by equal percentages in all four parishes. However, females had a much stronger need to seek a link between life and faith than the males. Likewise, the pre-Vatican II generation indicated a much stronger need than the other two generations to seek a link. The influence of the lay specialists in the need to make a link between life and faith traditions indicates interesting results. The lay specialists influence on parishioners' need to make connection between life and faith is the same as the influence exerted by the priests. And those who seek help from both, lay specialists and priests, showed much stronger need to make a connection between life and faith traditions. After examining the lay specialists influences on our respondents, I felt the need to examine the level of satisfaction of their specialized tasks in the parishes. I discuss this in the following section.

#### Parishioners' Satisfaction with Lay Specialists' Execution of Tasks

The study of satisfaction with human services or material goods produced by the organizations or factories is a common phenomenon. Anyone who receives such services or goods develops a kind of attitude about what they receive. This attitude in general is referred to as consumer satisfaction. In the context of the Catholic parishes, the parishioners can be regarded as "clientele" of the services provided by the parish specialists. I next discuss the satisfaction of the respondents (clientele) to the specialized services provided by the lay specialists in the parishes.

The term "satisfaction" in this section denotes the feelings of the respondents with regard to the services such as "It is a good program," "It helped me a lot in my religious experience," "It helped us in our marriage or family," and "I liked it." The term "dissatisfaction" denotes the opposite of the above expressions. In my preliminary interviews with the religious specialists I generated a list of 16 items that are under the direction of the lay specialists. For example, the CCD program is provided by the specialist in religious education, and marriage preparation is provided by the specialists in marriage and family. Although the Mass is not directly under the authority of the lay specialists, they are responsible for some aspects of the Mass: they are music directors, eucharistic ministers, altar servers, acolytes, and ushers who play their roles in the Mass. Therefore I included some items related to celebration of the Mass, such as the general quality of music and training of liturgical ministers, and the scheduling (frequency and timing) of Masses and Baptisms. I listed the 16 items on the questionnaire and asked the participants to respond to each item with the following questions: 1) strongly satisfied, 2) somewhat satisfied, 3) mixed feelings, 4) somewhat dissatisfied, 5) strongly dissatisfied, 6) no opinion.

The responses of the sample population were analyzed in two parts. First, I grouped the respondents as those who had an opinion and those who had no opinion on these items. The responses to questions 1-5 were reduced to one category of "those who had an opinion" as opposed to question 6 of "those who had no opinion." Secondly, among those who had an opinion, (the responses to questions 1-5) were



TABLE 67  
Distribution of Opinion on Lay Specialists' Services,  
by Number of Respondents in Each Parish  
(Y = Had an opinion; N = Had no opinion)

Items	St. Thomas		St. Benedict		St. Justin		St. Francis	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Training Persons	77	126	174	230	156	237	109	184
Baptism Prepar.	68	135	121	283	95	298	74	219
RCIA	83	120	199	205	134	259	71	222
CCD	75	128	140	264	153	240	116	177
Alpha	11	192	105	299	15	378	14	279
Marriage Prep	54	149	115	289	72	321	53	240
Marri. Enrich.	40	163	101	303	50	343	66	227
Single Support	39	164	60	344	56	337	39	254
Missions	60	143	217	186	121	272	96	197
Adult Ed.	59	144	114	290	136	257	114	290
Youth	65	138	90	314	100	293	79	214
Divorced & Seper.	34	169	41	363	45	348	19	274
Music	189	14	398	6	11	11	279	14
Mass (schedule)	191	12	397	7	378	15	273	20
Baptism (schedule)	123	80	213	191	171	222	200	93
Bereavement	51	152	40	364	73	320	26	267
Total Number of Respondents in Each Parish	203		404		393		293	

Table 67 shows that the level of opinion on the items differs among individual parishes. I classified these items into three groups according to the level of opinion expressed by all the 1293 respondents: 1) those items that have 50% and above opinions as high level, 2) those items that have 35 to 49% opinions as middle level, and 3) those items that have less than 35% opinions as low level. Accordingly,

liturgical ministers training, quality of music, schedule of Masses, and schedule of Baptisms have a high level opinion. RCIA, CCD, and missions have middle level opinion. And adult education, Baptism preparation, Alpha, marriage preparations, family and marriage enrichment, singles support, youth work, divorced and separated ministry, and bereavement ministry have low level opinion.

People tend to form opinions about persons, objects, and events for various reasons. Some people form opinions from personal experiences, some by learning from family members, and still others from the information gathered in some causal conversations. The various sources of information may explain the levels of opinion expressed in the survey sample. For example, quality of music has the highest percentage (97%) of respondents expressed their opinion in our population. Music, which is considered as an essential part of the Mass, is heard and experienced in Sunday Masses and most of the people who participate in the Masses tend to form opinions about it. The same thing could be said about the training of liturgical ministers. The majority of the participants in the Mass may not have seen the actual training of the altar servers, acolytes, or eucharistic ministers, yet they tend to form an opinion because they see the liturgical ministers performing their roles in the Sunday Masses.

The parishioners also learn about their parish programs from the priests or lay specialists or family members and friends. Some of these parishioners tend to form some opinion about the programs even though they may not have directly participated

in them. For example, parents learn about the CCD program from their children or friends and tend to form an opinion about it. The majority of the parishioners learn about RCIA in the community celebrations of the rituals and some tend to form opinions about it. Some parishioners may not be aware of the items or programs in their own parishes. They may hear about them from fellow parishioners in their causal conversations and tend to form some kind of opinion about them. For example, Alpha program is conducted only in one of the parishes. However, opinions on this program are expressed, though only in very small numbers, by respondents from the four sample parishes.

To sum up, I explained the possible reasons about the three levels of opinions expressed by the sample population on 16 items. The items or programs that are objects of personal participation or experience in the parish tend to get the most respondents' opinions (high level). On the contrary, the programs that are known to be in the parishes but not objects of direct experience, but learned from others, tend to receive some people's opinions (middle level). And the programs that are not known to be in the parishes but may be heard casually from others tend to have very few people's opinions (low level). Now I examine the next two categories, "satisfied" and "dissatisfied," among those who had expressed their opinions about the 16 items. Table 68 presents the distribution of "satisfaction" by number of respondents from each parish.

TABLE 68  
Distribution of Satisfaction on Lay Specialists' Services,  
by Number of Respondents in Each Parish  
(Y = Satisfied; N = Dissatisfied)

Items	St. Thomas		St. Benedict		St. Justin		St. Francis	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Training Persons	62	15	150	24	133	23	88	21
Baptism Prepar.	60	8	107	14	82	13	62	12
RCIA	70	13	178	21	106	28	51	20
CCD	59	16	90	50	119	34	78	38
Alpha	10	1	97	8	12	3	9	5
Marriage Prep.	43	11	104	11	52	20	44	9
Marriage Enrich.	30	10	90	11	35	15	56	10
Single Support	29	10	43	17	31	25	28	11
Missions	45	15	197	20	83	38	77	19
Adult Education	37	22	76	38	83	53	77	33
Youth	41	24	50	40	56	44	32	47
Divorced & Sep.	26	8	32	9	31	14	11	8
Music	143	46	364	34	301	81	241	38
Mass (schedule)	174	17	377	20	359	19	256	17
Baptism (schedule)	91	32	191	22	143	28	147	53
Bereavement	46	5	33	7	66	7	22	4
Total Number of Respondents in Each Parish	203		404		393		293	

Table 68 indicates that the parishes do have some noticeable differences on satisfaction in some items. I discuss these later. First, I grouped the satisfied items into three groups according to the levels of satisfaction expressed by all those who had opinions: 1) those items that have 80% and above of the satisfied as "high-range satisfaction" group, 2) those items that have 60-79% of satisfied as "mid-range

satisfaction" group, and 3) those items that have below 60% as "low-range satisfaction" group.

Clustering the items into the above three ranges of satisfaction, I found that 11 items namely, training liturgical ministers, quality of music, schedule of Masses and Baptisms, RCIA, Baptism preparation, missions, Alpha, marriage preparation, family and marriage enrichment, and bereavement ministry fall in the high range satisfactory level. Four items, namely, CCD, adult education, singles group, and divorced and separated ministry fall in the mid-range satisfactory level. One item, the youth ministry, falls in the low range satisfactory level. The three ranges of satisfaction reflect not only the personal experiences of the individual client who receives the services, but also the collective experiences of a family in which either the father or mother or a child participates in the programs and shares the experience of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with others.

Early in this chapter, I classified the sample parishes into Type One, Type Two, and Type Three on the basis of parish activities by agents. I found that the tasks of the lay specialists are unevenly distributed: in Type One parish, 18.2% of the essential tasks are performed by them. In Type Two parish, 42.9% of the essential tasks are performed by them. And in Type Three, the lay specialists perform 65.2% of the essential tasks in the parish.

I questioned whether there would be any statistically significant differences in percentages among the three types of parishes from the perspective of respondents'

satisfaction. Data analysis showed that in Type One, traditional parish, a significant difference was seen in the CCD program (78.67% with  $P<0.01$ ), and the youth program (63.08% with  $P<0.01$ ) from the other two types. Some difference was noticed in the youth program (63.08%) but it was not significant. At the other end, several items indicated significant differences in Type Three, transformed parish: RCIA (89.45% with  $P<0.001$ ), Alpha (92.38% with  $P<0.01$ ), marriage preparation (90.43% with  $P<0.01$ ), family and marriage enrichment (89.11% with  $P<0.01$ ), missions (90.78% with  $P<0.001$ ), quality of music (91.46% with  $P<0.001$ ), and schedule of Baptisms (89.67% with  $P<0.001$ ). Some differences were seen in training liturgical ministers (86.21%), Baptism preparation (88.43%), and in ministry to the divorced and separated (78.05%), but the differences were not significant. In Type Two, transitional parish, there were some differences from the other two types in adult education (70%), scheduling Masses (94%) and bereavement ministry (90%), but the differences were not statistically significant.

The analysis indicates significant differences in percentages of satisfaction in each type of parish: In Type One parish, 20% of the items or programs indicate more satisfaction than in Types Two and Three parishes. Sixty percent of the items in Type Three parish have more satisfaction than in Type One and Two. And 20% of the items indicate more satisfaction in Type Two parish than in Types One and Three. This diverse "satisfactory" view of the three types of parishes seems to correlate with the diverse profile of the lay specialists' essential tasks in each type of parish. The higher

the percentages of lay specialists' essential tasks in parishes, the higher the percentages of satisfaction are among the parishioners. This trend seems true in Type Three parish, where the percentages of lay specialists' ministerial tasks (65.2%) and respondents' satisfaction (62%) correlates, and in Type One parish, where the percentages of lay specialists' ministerial tasks (18.2%) match with respondents' satisfaction (20%). However, in Type Two parish, the correlation is not there. The percentages of the respondent's satisfaction (20%) is lower comparing the percentages of lay specialists' essential tasks (42.9%). The potential causes for this difference could be that in a Type Two parish, the tasks of the lay specialists are not specified and clear. A specialist performs several tasks that are not within the area of specialization.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS

### The Lay Specialists

The subject of this research is the phenomenon of lay specialists only in four Catholic parishes in Gilmer, Florida. This study was guided by search questions such as who are the lay specialists, how are they different from the laity, what are their distinct characteristics, what is the nature of their tasks in the parish, what are the domains of their services to the parishioners, and what is the impact of their specialized tasks in the parish? In this chapter, I summarize the findings of my research.

The word "laity" is derived from the Greek "laikos," meaning a certain secular character. It denotes a person who is neither a cleric nor vowed religious. The lay specialists belong to the clan of the "laity" but, they are different by their specialization, recognition, and remuneration. They have distinct characteristics. They are a subculture of the laity. Lay specialists' tasks in the parishes differ according to the area of specialization. They are highly motivated, educated, and skilled in collaboration.

Lay specialists' help to the parishioners embraces two domains outlined by the two ideologies of the Catholic Church. The lay specialists help the parishioners 1) to



participate in the common mission of the Church through involvement in the local churches (parishes) and 2) to respond to the personal Christian spirituality through human problems, religious beliefs and practices. Lay specialists' interactions in these domains were tested. Before presenting the results, I present an overview of the current state of human problems, religious beliefs and practices of the respondents.

### Human Problems

On the basis of findings on human problems, the following problems were found and ranked in an order from the most reported to the least reported: communication/conflict issues, loneliness/depression, self-esteem/worth, parent/child relationship, spouse/partner relations, parent/in-laws relationship, job loss, health issues, education, responsibility/commitment, unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, violence, drug/alcohol, and crime. The ranking from the most to the least reported was made to show the important problems of our sample population that are centered around their interpersonal and emotional issues. The problems such as crime and drugs/alcohol that get national attention in the media were not significant issues here. The data results indicated that the four parishes exhibit different clusters of human problems because of their diverse demographical factors. But, it would be fallacious to assume that certain problems belong only to certain demographical factors. The findings indicate that loneliness is not the problem of the elderly or the widowed, but it is pervasive also among the student population. In the same way, it would be inaccurate to assume that the human problems are same for males and females. The

results indicated that there were gender differences. Problems such as spouse/partner relationship, communication/conflict, and loneliness/depression were more important to women than men. Problems such as responsibility/commitment and parent/child relationships were more important to men. Issues related to job loss and health are considered equally important to women and men.

The impact of "personal prayer" on the human problems was analyzed with the hypothesis that people may pray about the problem before seeking help from the pastoral staff in the parishes. The results indicated that personal prayer is used on occasions of human problems. People pray first for problems that are vital to their life such as health, spouse/partner relationship, parent/child relationship, and job loss. They pray also for other problems such as loneliness/depression, self-esteem/worth, and communication/conflict.

### Religious Beliefs

From analysis of human problems I turned to the analysis of religion itself. Religious beliefs were analyzed in three categories: core Catholic beliefs, ethical and moral beliefs, and beliefs of traditional nature. The analysis indicated the level of Catholic beliefs in the sample population. For the purpose of reporting the findings below, I use three rating scales such as "very strong," "strong," and "mild" to indicate the levels of beliefs of the sample population in terms of Catholic Church's official teachings. Beliefs that had more than 70-100% were indicated "very strong," beliefs

that had 50-69% were indicated "strong," and beliefs that had less than 50% were indicated "mild."

### Core Catholic Beliefs

The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Virginal Conception of Jesus, Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, Life after Death, and Eternity of Hell were analyzed in this framework. The results indicated that there is a strong agreement with the Church's teaching (except in the post-Vatican II generation--18-34 years) in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and a very strong agreement in the Virginal Conception of Jesus, the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, and Life after Death. But there was a strong disagreement with the official belief of the Church on the Eternity of Hell. It is a departure from the Church's belief.

The post-Vatican II generation, in particular, showed disagreement with the Church's beliefs in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, and the Eternity of Hell. For example, nearly 50% of them showed tendency to believe in the symbolic presence rather than the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

### Beliefs: Ethical and Moral Nature

Premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexual acts, divorce and annulments, the use of contraceptives, and abortion were also analyzed. Analysis revealed a strong disagreement with the Church's teaching on premarital sex among the respondents in the post-Vatican II generation (18-34 years), and a mild disagreement among those

in the Vatican II generation (35-54 years) and in the pre-Vatican II generation (55 and above years). There was strong disagreement with the Church's teachings on divorce, annulment, and the use of contraceptives. There was very strong agreement with the Church's teaching about extramarital sex and abortion, and a strong agreement with the Church's teaching concerning the inherent inacceptability of homosexual acts.

#### Beliefs: Traditional Nature

Priestly celibacy and male priesthood were analyzed. A strong disagreement with Church's practice was found on the priestly celibacy in all age groups and between genders. The responses to traditional only male priesthood were split. There was a mild disagreement with the Church's practice among the males of all age groups and the women of older group; but an even a stronger disagreement among women of younger (18-34) and middle age groups (35-54).

#### Religious Practices

Religious practices were analyzed under three categories: the core Catholic practices, Catholic sacramental practices, and general Christian practices. For the purpose of reporting the findings here, I used three rating scales such as "high observance," "medium observance," and "low observance" to indicate the level of religious practices in the sample population. The practices that have more than 70%-100% of observance were classified "high," and practices that have 50-69% were classified "medium," and practices that have less than 50% were classified "low."

### The Core Catholic Practices

Mass, Communion, and Confession were analyzed in this category. When all ages were combined, a high level of observance in the weekly practices of Mass and Communion and a medium level of observance in the practice in Confession were found. A breakdown of the data by age group indicated that the post-Vatican II generation (18-34 years) of this survey population appears to be more dedicated to the observance of weekly Masses than population in the national survey. The findings of weekly Mass and Communion practices indicated that as people get older, they tend to become more religious. The findings in the practice of Confession, both in this sample population and national survey, suggest that the traditional practice of Confession is in the decline. Respondents said they ask God's forgiveness directly without the intervention of a priest.

### The Catholic Sacramental Practices

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Novena, Fast and Abstinence, Liturgy of the Hours, and Spiritual Retreat were analyzed. The data results indicated a low observance of traditional practices such as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Novena, and Spiritual Retreat. Responses indicated a very high level observance of "once-a-year" abstinence and nearly a high level observance of "once-a-year" fasting. Noticeable differences were found between genders. More women than men practiced in the following: Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Novena, and abstinence from meat.

The above findings suggest the women are more attached to several traditional practices than men.

### The General Christian Practices

Grace at meals, private Bible reading, other spiritual reading, charismatic prayer, centering prayer, and personal reflection of God were analyzed in this category. All these practices are low level observances according to the statistical analysis. However, a breakdown of data by age group and gender demonstrated noticeable differences. The findings indicate that some practices such as the Bible reading, other spiritual reading, and centering prayer are frequent among the young generation. A common trend between age and frequency of practice was found in responses about Grace at meals, personal reflection of God, and other spiritual reading. The older people were, the more likely they were to involve themselves in these practices. The data results indicated a significant difference between women and men in the practices of Bible reading and other spiritual reading. More women than men, in our survey population, are involved in the general Christian practices of Bible reading and other spiritual reading.

### Domain I: Lay Specialists and Parishioners' Involvement

The preceding gave insight into the current state of religious beliefs and practices among the respondents. Now I turn to the findings on the lay specialists' interactions with the respondents in the two domains. The hypothesis that the more

interactions of the lay specialists with the parishioners, the more the involvement of the parishioners in the parish, was tested.

The data results indicated that 60% of the respondents are involved (lightly and heavily) in some programs of the parish such as Eucharistic minister, choir member, RCIA sponsor, prayer couple, and parish council member. Still, 40% are not involved. The four parishes presented different profiles. St. Thomas, St. Justin and St. Francis have shown equal percentages of parishioners' involvement: about 31% are lightly involved, about 25% are heavily involved, and about 42% are not involved. The distribution differs in St. Benedict: one out of three is heavily involved, one out of three is lightly involved, and one out of three is not involved.

More men than women are involved in the parish programs, an unconventional finding. Women participate in religious services more than men. But their involvement in the parish programs is limited due to conventional obligations such as to taking care of the childrens' needs. Most of the programs conducted by lay specialists take place in the evening hours of the weekdays, when people who work can attend. However, these hours are inconvenient for women with children. The parish involvement by age groups indicated that pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and post-Vatican II generations are equally involved in the programs. Each generation finds programs that suit the particular interest of the age group.

The impact of lay specialists' services and/or interactions on the parishioner's involvement was measured. The data indicated a significant relationship between the

tendency a person has to seek help from lay specialists on human problems and the degree of that person's involvement in parish programs. Of those who had sought help from the lay specialists, 76% are involved (lightly and heavily). At the other side, of those who had sought no help from the lay specialists, 57% are involved (lightly and heavily) in the parish. The lay specialist's influence is very significant among those who are heavily involved in the parish. In this category, the percentage of those who sought help from the lay specialists was double that of those who sought no help from the lay specialists. For comparative purposes, I tested if there would be any difference between those who seek lay specialists' help and the priests' help in terms of their parish involvement. The result indicated that those who seek help from priests tend to get less involved in the parish than those who seek help from the lay specialists.

I tested the following two-part assumption as one of the possible reasons for the parishioners to be involved in the parish: They look up to the lay specialists as examples of a) how to be involved in the parish, and b) how to seek connection between life experience and faith traditions. Traditionally, the essential tasks in the Catholic parishes were performed by the priests. Now several of those tasks are being performed by the lay specialists. The lay specialists represent both the laity by their "lay" status and the priests by their "specialists" status in some Christian tradition. When the parishioners seek help from the lay specialists, I assume that they see the specialists as their examples to share in the works of the parish and to seek a connection between their faith and life experience.



The first part of the assumption was tested with the following statement: "The lay specialists in the parishes demonstrate in a formal way what all baptized persons are called to do by the Church." The test results indicated significant difference among the parishes. In St. Benedict parish, where 65.2% of the essential tasks are performed by the lay specialists, 69% of the respondents said that lay specialists are their example. In St. Thomas parish, where only 18.2% of the essential tasks are performed by the lay specialists, only 45% said that lay specialists are their example. On the basis of these findings, it appears that the more lay specialists work in the Catholic parishes, the more likely it is that a high percentage of parishioners see them as examples. The parishioners involve themselves in the parish, seeing the lay specialists as models. This varies by the level of one's education. Those who have higher education, such as the doctorate, indicated that they are convinced of the role of lay specialists as their examples in the parishes. The educated are more likely to involve themselves in the parishes as well.

The second part of my assumption was tested with the following statement: "The need to make connection between my life and faith tradition is very strong or strong or moderate." The results indicated an almost equal distribution of percentages in each parish. However, I found significant differences in gender. On the basis of the results, more women than men seek meaning between their life experience and faith. They are more likely to see the lay specialists as examples and seek help in interpreting the meaning of the problem in religious terms. The differences were also

found in the age groups. Results showed that the post-Vatican II generation (18-34 years) is not interested in seeking a link between life and faith as much as the pre-Vatican II generation (55 and above years). The interest of Vatican II generation in seeking a connection between life experience and faith is stronger than the post-Vatican II, but a little weaker than the pre-Vatican II generation. On the basis of these results, it appears that as people grow older, they are more likely to increase their interest in seeking meaning for life problems in their religious terms.

The influence of the lay specialists and priests on respondents' seeking a link between experience and faith was measured. The results indicated that respondents approach both the lay specialists and priests in finding religious meaning to their life problems. The lay specialists have as strong an impact on the respondents as the priests in this matter. It is a new phenomenon in the Catholic parish, because formerly the priests were the only religious specialists in the parishes to interpret the meaning of problems in religious terms. The priests gave to the parishioners direction and pastoral advice on coping with problems. Now this help is sought by the parishioners from the lay specialists, whose influence on the parishioners is as strong as the priests. In the very process of help the persons with life problems, the lay specialists share their own religious experience in coping with the problems--all from a perspective of one lay person to another lay person. I have made this inference within the theoretical paradigm of Human Materialism, which says, "An ideology begins to die out (i.e., has progressively fewer adherents) if those who promote it fail to gain

infrastructural power or lose such power” (Magnarella, 1993, p. 32). When the lay specialists help the parishioners in the context of their own religious experience and life problems, they are not only legitimately giving witness to the ideology of Vatican II, but also reinforcing the same ideology among the parishioners. Such witness to and reinforcement of the ideology strengthen their positions of power among the parishioners and increase their adherents.

#### Domain II: Lay Specialists and Parishioner's Christian Spirituality

I explored in domain II whether there is any indication of possible influence in the beliefs and practices of the respondents because of the interactions with the lay specialists.

I hypothesized that the lay specialists could lead the parishioners to Christian Spirituality through application of the belief and practices to human problems. I suspected that some lay specialists are more involved in matters of belief and some lay specialists in matters of practice. For example, the specialist in Spirituality would employ religious beliefs in order to interpret and make meaning out of human problems. The specialist in Liturgy would give greater emphasis to the religious practices (rituals) to celebrate them in the community with appropriate devotion as to satisfy parishioner's spiritual quest. But in either case I hypothesized that with stronger interactions with lay specialists there would be stronger influence in religious beliefs and practices.

My hypothesis was not borne out. I found no significant correlation between the first core beliefs (the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the virginal conception of Jesus, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and life after death) and the degree of interactions with the lay specialists (or priests) in the parish. However, I found a discrepancy in the belief of the eternity of Hell. Nearly 50% disagreed with the traditional beliefs of the Church. And this departure from the official belief was significantly higher among those who interacted only with the lay specialists than among those not interacting or interacting with priests. Reward and punishment are common categories of human society, where someone is rewarded for good work with money, promotion, or social honor, and for bad performance someone is punished with the denial of such rewards. Such categories of reward and punishment seem to reinforce the value of personal responsibility in the society. The same categories of reward for good life and punishment for bad life in religious setting are meant to promote personal and moral responsibility in the life of the believers. The denial of even one category, such as punishment, not only devalues personal and moral accountability, but also questions the commonly believed "justice" of God, Who gives rewards to those who merit them and punishment to those who fail.

The ethical and moral beliefs of the respondents are divided. On the issues of premarital sex, and use of contraceptives the respondents' interactions with lay specialists is correlated with higher level of departure from the official teachings of the Church. On the issues of abortion and the inherent nature of homosexuality,

disagreement with the Church's positions are found among those who interact with the lay specialists than priests, but there was no statistical significance. I found a strong agreement with the Church's teaching on extramarital sex. On the issue of divorce and annulment, there was disagreement with the Church, a stance independent of their interactions with the lay specialists or priests. The division of beliefs among the respondents indicates the fine line between those beliefs that seem "personal" and others that are "social." For example, the use of contraceptives is personal; the use of abortion is social except for the person directly involved in it. On the basis of these findings, it appears that the parishioners hold personal moral beliefs that affect their day-to-day lives, even though they are contrary to the teaching of the Church.

On matters of concerning the traditional practices namely priestly celibacy and male priesthood, the majority of the respondents disagree with the positions of the Church. On the male priesthood, 51% of the respondents want women to be ordained to the priesthood, a stance shared equally whether one interacted with the lay specialists or priests. Of these two practices, priestly celibacy has been retained, adapted, or even abandoned by the Church's authority according to the needs of time. The very "traditional nature" of these beliefs invites people to express their views for and against the present practices. It is my assumption that, even when the present practices are adopted or changed, they will remain perennial subjects of discussion in the Church, because of their traditional nature.

I examined the question: Does interactions with the lay specialists influence the respondents' religious practices? The results indicated no noticeable difference in the core Catholic practices of Mass and Communion in terms of interactions with the lay specialists or priests. However, 10% of those who sought help from the priests practiced Confession than those who sought help from the lay specialists. On the basis of this finding, it appears that the priests' interactions with the parishioners in the core practices would increase the practice of Confession in the parishes. My data denoted a trend in the weekly practices of Mass and Communion: as the parishioners become older, they go to weekly Mass and Communion more frequently. If this life-cycle is right, the religious specialists are challenged to teach the younger generation all the beliefs and practices of Catholic culture that are necessary for them to retain a Catholic identity.

In Sacramental practices, the more parishioners interact with the pastoral staff (lay specialists and priests), the more they tend to practice. I found that practices such as the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, and retreat are higher among those who interact with the lay specialists. In the practice of the Liturgy of the Hours, there is more interaction with the priests. I did not find significant differences in other practices such as Novena, fasting, abstinence, and Rosary. My data results indicated that more women than men practice the majority of the sacramental practices. I assume that this factor has some relationship to the fact that the majority (66%) of the lay specialists are females.

On matters of general Christian practices, the interactions of the lay specialists and priests had a strong impact. The more respondents interacted with the pastoral staff, the more they tend to practice. My data results indicated that those who interacted with the lay specialists showed greater interest in Bible reading, other spiritual reading, charismatic prayer, and centering prayer than those who interacted with the priests. More women than men are involved in some Christian practices such as Bible reading and other spiritual readings. It may be that female lay specialists' interactions with women explains why more women than men were involved in those practices.

#### Lay Specialists and Parishioner's Financial Contribution

Parishioners give financial contributions to their parishes. My assumption, that there is a correlation between the parishioner's financial contributions and the lay specialist's services, was tested. First, I established the weekly mean income of the four parishes. The data showed that, St. Benedict parish has the lowest weekly mean income, and the highest numbered unemployed members in the parish. The majority of those unemployed are University students.

My analysis indicated a positive correlation between those who seek the lay specialists' services and their financial contribution to the parish. Those who seek the services of the lay specialists contribute 26.5 dollars per week in contrast to 19.8 dollars weekly contribution by those who did not seek lay specialists' services. I found a negative correlation: those who seek the services of the priests give less than

those who do not seek their services. A weekly contribution of 21.2 dollars was given by those who did not seek priests' services in contrast to 19.2 dollars per week by those who seek priests' services. On the basis of these findings, it appears that the services of lay specialists in Catholic parishes increase parishioner's financial contribution more than the services of the priests do.

A hypothesis that the wealthier parishioners seek the lay specialists' services was used to test further the correlation between parishioner's financial contribution and lay specialists' services. First, using the income categories, I found the percentages of parishioners who seek the services of lay specialists and priests. The results indicated that the most affluent (incomes of \$75K or more) as well as the least affluent (incomes less than \$25K) are seeking the lay specialists' services. I found a different tendency among those who seek the services of the priests. Those who seek the priests' services are predominantly those with income of less than \$25K.

I compared the weekly contribution of the least and most affluent in terms of the services they seek either from the lay specialists or priests. Among the least affluent, I found no significant difference in the weekly contribution between those who are seeking the services of the lay specialists and those who are not. Their weekly contribution is the same. Therefore, I concluded that the services of the lay specialists increased the weekly contribution only in the other income brackets. Testing for the services of the priests, I found that the parishioners who seek the



priests' services made the same weekly contribution as those who are seeking the help of the lay specialists.

I found a significant difference among the very wealthy people's contribution to the parish. Those who seek lay specialists' services give a weekly contribution of 83 dollars in contrast to a 45 dollars contribution from those who do not. That is to say, that those in the wealthier group who seek services of the lay specialists contribute nearly twice as much as those who are not seeking their services. Testing for the priests' services, I did not find a significant difference between those who seek their services and those who do not. That is to say, the very wealthy give the same amount whether they seek the services of the priests or not. On the basis of these findings, it appears that controlling for income increases the importance of the lay specialists' services in predicting weekly parish contributions.

#### Lay Specialists' Services and Parishioners' Satisfaction

Lay specialists' services were analyzed to find the parishioner's satisfaction. I established the number of respondents in each parish who had an opinion or no opinion on lay specialists' services. Then, I compared the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with general parish services to opinions on the services of the lay specialists. The opinions of the parishioners are classified into three rating scales: high, middle, and low. My data results indicate a high level of opinion on the quality of music, liturgical ministers' training, schedule of Masses and Baptisms, a middle level of opinion on RCIA, CCD, and missions; and a low level of opinion on adult

education, Baptism preparation, Alpha, marriage preparations, family and marriage enrichment, singles support, youth work, ministry to the divorced and separated, and bereavement ministry. Analyzing the nature of the above services or programs in terms of parishioner's experience, I concluded that those services that are objects of personal participation and/or experience evoked opinions. Those services that are not direct objects of experience or participation, but learned from others, tend to evoke a middle level of opinion. Those services that may not be in the parishes, but only heard in a casual conversation have a low level of opinion.

Parishioner's satisfaction in the services of the lay specialists was analyzed only from the responses of the group who reported their opinions. My data results indicated a high level of satisfaction in training liturgical ministers, quality of music, schedule of Masses and Baptisms, RCIA, Baptism preparation, missions, Alpha, marriage preparation, family and marriage enrichment, and bereavement ministry; a mid-range satisfaction in CCD, adult education, singles group, and ministry to the divorced and separated; and a low range satisfaction with the youth ministry. It is my assumption that these satisfactory ranges reflect the personal experiences as well as the collective experiences of a family or group that are shared with others.

An analysis to find statistical significance in parishioner's satisfaction on 16 items was done among the three types of parishes. My results indicated that CCD and youth ministry had a significant satisfaction in the Type One parish (traditional parish); RCIA, Alpha, marriage preparation, family and marriage enrichment,

missions, quality of music, and schedule of Baptisms found a significant satisfaction in the Type Three parish (transformed parish); and adult education, schedule of Masses, and bereavement ministry found somewhat significant satisfaction in the Type Three parish (transitional parish). I found that the parishes differ in percentages of satisfactory-significance in the items: 13% in Type One, 69% in Type Three, and 18% in Type Two. These differences correspond to the percentages of essential tasks that are performed in each Type of parish by the lay specialists: 18.2% in Type One, 65.2% in Type Three, and 42.9% in Type Two. On the basis of these findings, it appears that the satisfactory-significance in parish programs will increase with an increase of ministerial tasks by the lay specialists.

#### A Pragmatic Question: Are the Lay Specialists Needed in Parishes?

When asking this question, I had two purposes: 1) to avoid any theological argument or speculation and 2) to draw a practical summation from the materials of this research. In regard to my first purpose, two ideologies of Vatican II are treated here only from the perspective of Human Materialism (Magnarella, 1993), which served as the theoretical paradigm to this research. Within the paradigm, the ideologies of Vatican II are said to indicate the legitimacy of the lay specialists in the parish organization, as well as to point out the two domains of lay specialists' services to the parishioners. I am not speculating on theological validity of the ideologies of Vatican II.

I draw a practical summation from the perspective of the present research. Testing for validity on conditions, environments, and influences that supposedly contribute to the survival and development of people is a common practice in social sciences. Accordingly, I have tested and analyzed the tasks or impact of a newly emerging phenomenon, lay specialists, on parishioners in four Catholic parishes.

The sociocultural matrix in which the lay specialists work is a complex reality. In the United States such institutions as 1) family, 2) school, and 3) religious organization have been the vehicles transmitting values and forming character in human persons. These institutions are in a state of crisis. Families are undergoing dramatic changes. The traditional nuclear family is on the decline. Due to divorces and unwed mothers, single-parent families are becoming common. Among the single-parents, the majority are women. The family breakdown is associated with social problems such as drug-crisis, education-crisis, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime. Families have major problems such as communication conflict, loneliness/depression, poor parent/child and spouse/partner relationships, health issues, and job loss. Family problems affect schools that transmit skills as well as norms to children. The Catholic Church in the United States depended in the past on parochial schools to transmit Catholic culture to the future generations. The school was an organic part of the parish. But now, a decline in the Catholic schools is a widespread reality in the United States. In the 1960s, there were 11,000 elementary schools and 2,400 high schools providing Catholic education for about 5.6 million students in the United

States. But, by the 1990s, there were only 7,505 elementary schools and 1,362 Secondary schools, a considerable decline from the figures of the 1960s (Francis & Egan, 1990). There is only one Catholic school in the survey area of this study to meet the needs of the students from four parishes.

The religious organization of Catholic parishes in the United States is in crisis. It is aggravated by the shortage of priests. According to the National Pastoral Life Center in New York, about 300 parishes are under the leadership of someone other than a priest. Of these, about 65% are headed by religious sisters and one-third by permanent deacons and lay people. And several parishes are helped by priests who are pastors in other parishes (Murnion, 1994). In the 1960s, there were 35,070 diocesan priests in the United States. It is predicted that by the year 2005, there will be approximately 21,030 priests. It is predicted also that there will be a 65% increase in demand for priestly services due to an increase in Church membership. In the years between 1965 and 1985, Church membership is said to have increased from 44,790,000 to 64,341,000 people. The increase is attributed to high fertility rates and a flow of immigration from Asia and South America. By the year 2005, Church membership is expected to rise to 74,109,000 people (Schoenherr & Young, 1993).

There was not a shortage of priests in the survey area. There are three diocesan priests in St. Thomas and St. Benedict, one diocesan and one religious priest in St. Justin, and one diocesan priest in St. Francis. However, it is expected that in the next

5 to 10 years, there will be fewer priests in this area because of priests' retirement and shortage of vocations to the priesthood.

National studies indicate that there has been an erosion of Catholic identity in the United States (Gallup & Castelli, 1987; Hunter, 1990). A group has a strong identity when there are strong bonds of solidarity among members of the group and a sense of how one's group differs from other groups. (The sense of difference need not entail either disdain or hostility for other groups). The Catholic solidarity was rooted in distinctive beliefs and practices which I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The forces of "mainstream" culture are challenging those distinctive beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. As a result, the post-Vatican II generation (18-34) has 1) little knowledge about what is distinctive about Catholicism and 2) lacks Catholic vocabulary to talk about Catholic beliefs and practices. The distinctive Catholic belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is disappearing among the younger generation (18-34). God is accepted as a loving person who will not punish anyone even if he or she does wrong. Age groups disagree on Church's teachings such as premarital sex, birth control, divorce, and annulment. While the number of weekly Mass attenders receiving Communion has risen, the practice of the Sacramental Confession has lessened significantly. Some traditional Catholic practices such as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, and Novena are disappearing. The Catholic parishes in the United States face not only the shortage of priests' services,

but also the disappearance of a Catholic identity that was preserved through distinct beliefs and practices.

Human Materialism (Magnarella, 1993) assumes that when open systems are intruded by environmental or cultural forces, they may respond to these forces by elaborating their structures to more complex levels. I maintain that the lay specialists are the new “phenomenon” that is emerging in Catholic parishes to work in a time when the very infrastructural components of the Catholic organizations (parishes) are at stake because of the breakdown in families, disappearance of Catholic education, erosion of Catholic identity (in beliefs and practices). The lay specialists are motivated, specialized in education, and skilled to work in collaboration with the priests and people as a team. As is evidenced by my research data, the lay specialists are giving help in human problems by fostering better relationships between spouse/partner and parents and children; identifying problems of responsibility/commitment; improving skills to improve communication between husbands and wives and partents and children; improving feelings of self-worth and self-esteem; inviting the lonely/depressed to participate in community events, and making recommendations and referrals on health issues. In all these areas, the lay specialists appeal to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the persons. They help to restore harmony for those who have problems in resolving those problems and their religious beliefs and practices. The lay specialists prepare the celebration of the rituals in such a way as to create an atmosphere of spiritual

experience for the parishioners. Providing good spiritual experiences helps people develop strong emotional attachments to the parishes and, in return, these parishes can call on the parishioners for financial and social support (Magnarella, 1993). Survey data results in an increase in the levels of parishioners' involvement, weekly financial contribution, and satisfaction support it. The parishioners recognize the services of the lay specialists by accepting them as examples of how to involve themselves in the parish and seek a link between their life problems and faith traditions.

On the basis of these findings, it appears that the lay specialists in the Catholic parishes respond to environmental or cultural stresses in their specialized roles and contribute to the stability and/or survival of the parish organizations. This agrees with Anthony Wallace's 1966 analysis of revitalization movements, which also identifies stress as the cause of the emergence of new religious patterns (p. 34). Further research should focus on the impact of lay specialists' services on the life of the ordained specialists (priests). In the context of increased lay specialists' services in the parish, the ordained specialists become "generalists" with the primary duties of presiding over the ritual celebrations in the parish. Because the parishioners seek help from the lay specialists and work as volunteers under the direction of the lay specialists, the priest's direct contact with the parishioners is lessened. The tasks of the priests in the Catholic parishes in the future could be primarily the celebration of Mass and Sacraments. And, since the priests' roles are shifting from the traditional ones to those role of spiritual animator and/or the overseer of the lay specialists, will the priests



have the necessary collaborative skills to work with the lay specialists? How will this collaboration change the future training of candidates to the priesthood? Questions such as these could lead to investigations of the shifting roles of the ordained specialists in Catholic parishes. My data results indicate that parishes need to have more lay specialists to increase the parishioners' involvement in the parish and financial contributions to the parish. I hope this study will provide information and inspiration for further anthropological studies on religious organizations, organizations that are vital for the integration of sociocultural norms and values.

## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

- (1) Please write your answer in the space “\_\_\_\_\_” provided for each question.
- (2) Where appropriate, use the code number given in the box to determine your answer.
- (3) Please do not write your name or address. Your information will remain anonymous.
- (4) If you take this questionnaire home, please mail it on Monday in the postage-paid envelope. Please seal the envelope.

Thank you,

Fr. Anthony Michaelraj

For Office Use Only
Parish Code .....
Date .....

### Your Religious Practices

1. Please estimate how often, on average, you have carried out the following activities within the past 12 months.

0=Did not do it in the last 12 months
1=Once a year
2=Several times a year
3=Once a month
4=Several times a month
5=Once a week
6=Several times a week
7=Daily

☐ Mass  
☐ Communion  
☐ Confession  
☐ Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament  
☐ Rosary  
☐ Stations of the Cross  
☐ Novena  
☐ Fasting  
☐ Abstaining from meat

☐ Grace at meals  
☐ Private Bible reading  
☐ Other spiritual reading  
☐ Liturgy of the Hours  
☐ Spiritual retreat  
☐ Charismatic prayer meetings  
☐ Centering prayer  
☐ Personal reflection of God

### Your Religious Beliefs

2. In each of the following questions, you will be given two opposing religious or moral propositions (A, B). Indicate in the space which of the propositions most closely approximates your own position.

1=Strongly agree with A	4=Mildly agree with B
2=Mildly agree with A	5=Strongly agree with B
3=Unsure	0=Disagree with both positions

- \_\_\_\_\_ (A) The tradition of priestly celibacy should be preserved.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (B) Catholic priests should be allowed to marry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Women should be able to be ordained as priests.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (B) The tradition of a male Catholic priesthood should be preserved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Christ is physically present in the Eucharist. The bread and wine have been literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (B) The Eucharist is a sacred symbol of Christ.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Jesus was conceived without physical input from a human father.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (B) The Gospel account is symbolic and Jesus was probably conceived the same way as other humans.

- \_\_\_\_ (A) The Resurrection of Christ was spiritual. Jesus' body may have undergone physical corruption.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) Christ literally and physically rose from the dead with a transformed body.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) Death will be the end of individual human souls.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) My soul will continue to live even after my death.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) God is so loving that there cannot be eternal punishment or hell.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) Those who die in sin will suffer in hell through all eternity.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) Sexual intercourse between two unmarried people is against God's Law.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) If a couple truly cares for each other, premarital sex can be a legitimate expression of their love.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) It is wrong for a married person to have sexual intercourse with someone other than his/her spouse.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) Sometimes a married person can legitimately have a sexual intercourse with someone other than his/her spouse.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) The Church should prohibit divorce and restrict annulments.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) The Church should be more flexible in its divorce and annulment policy.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) The use of contraceptives is wrong.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) Married couples can legitimately decide to use contraceptives.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) Sexual activities can be a legitimate expression of mutual love between consenting homosexuals.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) Homosexual acts are inherently wrong.
- \_\_\_\_ (A) Restrictions on abortion infringe on a woman's rights over her own body.  
 \_\_\_\_ (B) Abortion entails the killing of an innocent human life from the moment of conception.

### Your Life Crisis and the Parish

3. Look at the following problem list. For each one state whether it has been a problem for you personally.

0=It has not been a problem  
 1=It has been a minor problem  
 2=It has been a major problem

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ____ Sickness or poor health                             | ____ Loss of job or other economic stress                      |
| ____ Problems with alcohol or drugs                      | ____ Educational problems (admissions, failure, assistantship) |
| ____ Domestic violence (emotional, physical, and sexual) | ____ Problems of loneliness and/or depression                  |
| ____ Problems with parent/child relationships            | ____ Problems with understanding responsibility and commitment |

- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with one's parents or in-laws
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy in the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relational problems with one's spouse or dating partner

- \_\_\_\_\_ Communication/conflict issues in relationships
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with self-worth/self-esteem
- \_\_\_\_\_ Victimization by crime

4. Look at the same problem list again. This time indicate whether you have sought help from anyone on the parish staff on this matter.

0=I have not approached anyone on the staff about this problem.  
 1=I have sought help from a professional lay staff member of the parish.  
 2=I have sought help from one of the parish priests.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sickness or poor health
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with alcohol or drugs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Domestic violence (emotional, physical, and sexual)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with parent/child relationships
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with one's parents or in-laws
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy in the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relational problems with one's spouse or dating partner

- \_\_\_\_\_ Loss of job or other economic stress
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational problems (admissions, failure, assistantship)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems of loneliness and/or depression
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with understanding responsibility and commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Communication/conflict issues in relationships
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with self-worth/self-esteem
- \_\_\_\_\_ Victimization by crime

5. Please look at the same problem list one final time. This time indicate how frequently you really and truly engage in personal prayer about that particular problem.

0=Rarely if ever engage in personal prayer about it.  
 1=Occasionally engage in personal prayer about it.  
 2=Frequently engage in personal prayer about it.  
 3=Daily engage in personal prayer about it.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sickness or poor health
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with alcohol or drugs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Domestic violence (emotional, physical, and sexual)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with parent/child relationships
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with one's parents or in-laws
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancy in the family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relational problems with one's spouse or dating partner

- \_\_\_\_\_ Loss of job or other economic stress
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational problems (admissions, failure, assistantship)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems of loneliness and/or depression
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with understanding responsibility and commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Communication/conflict issues in relationships
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problems with self-worth/self-esteem
- \_\_\_\_\_ Victimization by crime

6. \_\_\_\_\_ "The need to make connections between my life experience and faith tradition is:" Choose one of the following.

1=Very strong in my life.  
2=Strong in my life.  
3=Moderate in my life.  
4=Weak in my life.  
5=Absent in my life.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ "Lay Professionals in our Parish demonstrate in a formal way what all baptized persons are called to do by the Church, by virtue of their Baptism." Choose one of the following.

1=I am very convinced.  
2=I am somewhat convinced.  
3=I am not convinced.  
4=I don't know.

### Your Parish Involvement

8. \_\_\_\_\_ Which parish do you belong to?

1=St. Benedict  
2=St. Thomas  
3=St. Justin  
4=St. Francis  
5=Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_ Indicate which of the following services do you now perform, or have you performed in the past, for your parish?

1=I currently perform that role.  
2=I have done it in the past but not now.  
3=I have never performed that role.

☐ Eucharistic minister  
☐ Catechist/Religious Education Volunteer  
☐ Reader/Lector  
☐ Altar server/acolyte  
☐ Choir member/music ministry  
☐ Usher/hospitality  
☐ Sacristan

☐ Education Committee member  
☐ Liturgy Committee member  
☐ Retreat Team Member  
☐ RCIA Sponsor  
☐ Prayer Couple  
☐ Sponsor Couple for the Engaged  
☐ Youth group leader or coordinator

10. Please express your opinion on the following programs of your parish.

1=Strongly satisfied	4=Somewhat dissatisfied
2=Somewhat satisfied	5=Strongly dissatisfied
3=Mixed feelings	0=No opinion or no basis for judging

☐ Training for Liturgical Ministers (Lector, EME's, Altar Servers, etc.)  
☐ RCIA program (for receiving converts into the Church)  
☐ Baptism Preparation  
☐ CCD program (Religious Education)

☐ Adult educational programs  
☐ Youth program for high school students  
☐ Bereavement ministry  
☐ Mass (schedule)  
☐ Baptism (schedule)  
☐ Mission programs  
☐ Divorced and separated support group

☐ Alpha program  
☐ Marriage preparation  
☐ Family and Marriage enrichment  
☐ Singles support group  
☐ Music

11. How much per week, on the average, do you currently give? (Write the sum in the space.)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to your parish

**Your Background Questions**

To end this survey we will ask you certain background questions about yourself. This will permit me to see if different subgroups of Catholics—e.g., different age groups or income categories—cluster together.

12. \_\_\_\_\_ Indicate your gender.

1=Male
2=Female

13. \_\_\_\_\_ What is the year of your birth? (Write the last two digits in the space.  
(For example: 46 for 1946).

14. \_\_\_\_\_ Your highest education level.

1=Elementary	6=Master's (e.g. M.A., M.S., or M.B.A.)
2=High school	7=Specialist (e.g. Ed.S.)
3=Some college	8=Graduate professional degree (e.g. J.D.)
4=College graduate	9=Doctorate (e.g. Ph.D., M.D., or D.D.S.)
5=Some graduate or professional school	

15. How many years did you attend Catholic school (write number of years in the spaces)?

\_\_\_\_\_ in grammar school? \_\_\_\_\_ in high school? \_\_\_\_\_ in college?

16. \_\_\_\_\_ Are you currently a student (University, Community College, High School, etc.)?

0=Not now a student
1=Part-time student
2=Full-time student

17. \_\_\_\_\_ What is your current employment status?

0=Not currently employed	3=Employed full-time
1=Employed part-time	4=Retired

18. \_\_\_\_\_ What is your current marital status?

0=Never married	3=Divorced
1=Married	4=Widowed
2=Separated	



19. \_\_\_\_\_ Final question: What is the approximate gross annual income of your household?

1=\$0-9,999	8=\$40,000-44,000
2=\$10,000-14,000	9=\$45,000-49,000
3=\$15,000-19,000	10=\$50,000-74,000
4=\$20,000-24,000	11=\$75,000-99,000
5=\$25,000-29,000	12=\$100,000-200,000
6=\$30,000-34,000	13=\$200,000 and above
7=\$35,000-39,000	

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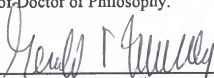


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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

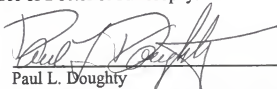
Anthony S. Michaelraj was born in Pallam, India, on September 26, 1947. In May 1965 he graduated from Carmel High School in Nagercoil, India. He entered the seminary in June 1965 to pursue studies in priesthood. After the completion of two years of Latin, three years of philosophy, one year of practicum, and four years of theology he was ordained a priest on February 4, 1975. He earned a master's degree in theological studies in 1978 from the University of St. Thomas in Rome, Italy, and another master's degree in counselor education in 1987 from Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe, Louisiana. He completed his studies for the Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Florida in 1997. He is currently the Chancellor of the Diocese of Kottar, in India.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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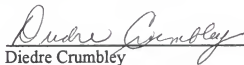
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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